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THE UNFOLDING OF THE AGES

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The Unfolding of the Ages

IN

THE REVELATION OF JOHN

By

FORD C. OTTMAN

Watchman, what of the night?
The morning cometh, and also the night.
Isaiah.

Serum tamen tacitis Judicium venit pedibus

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TO MY BELOVED FRIEND

Walter M. Smith

WHOSE UNFAILING SYMPATHY HAS BEEN

ONE OF THE INSPIRATIONS

OF MY MINISTRY

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED

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INTRODUCTION

IN the following pages the Apostolic authorship of the Book of Revelation is accepted on the ground of its having been proved thoroughly and convincingly by competent scholarship. Such has been the belief of the great majority of Christians in all ages. The first denial of this was made in the second century by the heretical Alogi, and a revival of the early attempt to find another John than the Apostle has not succeeded in changing the general opinion. The writer of the fourth Gospel was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the Apocalypse, and this fact guarantees the title of the book to a place in the sacred canon.

Reference is here made to the different schools of interpretation, not for the purpose of giving any account of apocalyptic commentators, but in order to indicate the reason for adhering to the plan followed in the exposition of the book.

The *Præterists,* as the term implies, believe that the whole book, or at least nearly everything in it that claims to be prediction, has already been fulfilled. Such a theory is comparatively of recent origin, and was not even thought of by the early Christian Fathers. It is set aside by the writer for the all-sufficient reason that the predictions of the book are in the plainest possible terms connected with the Second Coming of Christ, and must therefore be viewed in their obvious relation to that event.

The *Historical* interpreters, who regard the book of Revelation as a record of the church of Christ in conflict with her foes through all time, are, in the judgment of the writer, convicted of error, not only by the multitude of discordant voices among them, but by their failure *universally* to furnish anything from history which can be even fairly regarded as

exhausting the language used by John. Texts have been repeatedly wrested in order to make them harmonize with some preconceived scheme, and this is a fault "so glaring and so frequent" in the exposition of this school, that the late Dean Alford, though in the main belonging to it, has uttered his emphatic protest. Abundant evidence of such textual violence can be found in almost any of the commentaries produced by this Historical school. There is no need of further reference to these interpreters. Their expositions have been to the majority of ministers, and to other Bible students, unsatisfactory to a degree. It is extremely doubtful if *any* book of Scripture has so suffered from the hands of its friends as this book of Revelation.

The *Futurists* maintain that the book is largely, if not altogether, predictive in character, and that even the seven churches addressed will be found in existence in the last days. The *literal* interpretation of the text, so generally adopted by this school, raises in the minds of many, peculiar, if not insuperable difficulties.

There is an ever increasing number of Bible students who are coming to believe that it was the intention of the Holy Spirit to cover in the seven brief epistles to the churches the entire period of the Christian Dispensation. In other words, the many volumes of church history as compiled by man are by the Holy Spirit reduced into these brief letters which are thus made to constitute the history of the church from the Divine side. This is no doubt humiliating to the pride of man, and may possibly bring under hopeless condemnation one that may suggest it to be even so. According to this theory, everything from the fourth chapter to the end of the book is still future and will follow the removal of the church from the earth at the appearing of our Lord. Such is the view accepted and advocated by the writer of the following pages. It is the *only* one, which, in his judgment, can be consistently maintained to the end without any violent strain on the language. Such a view seems also to be in harmony with our Lord's great

prophecy in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. Mr. Isaac Williams calls this prophecy "the anchor of apocalyptic interpretation." Dean Alford says it is "the touchstone of apocalyptic systems." In reference to this same prophecy, Alford further says: "If its guidance be not followed in the interpretation of the seals: if any other than our Lord is he that goes forth conquering and to conquer, then, though the subsequent interpretation may have occasional points of contact with truth, and may thus be in parts profitable to us, the system is an erroneous one, and, as far as it is concerned, the true key to the book is lost."

This passage is quoted from Alford because the writer, while under profound obligation to him for much valuable help, is nevertheless compelled often to differ widely from him. This issue with him begins at the breaking of the first seal, where, instead of believing the victorious rider of the white horse to be the Lord Jesus as insisted on by Alford, the writer believes him to be antichrist. This, surely, is more in conformity with our Lord's prophecy. The white horse of the first seal is followed by war, pestilence, and death. These are, according to the Lord's prophecy, the *beginning* of sorrows which issue in a great tribulation after which the Son of Man is seen "coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." This fact will be considered fully in its proper place.

The "Jewish Question" is recognized in this book; and conclusive Scriptural testimony will be furnished to establish the fact of Israel's future glory and unique position among the nations. The writer believes that in the history of the prophet Jonah there is represented the dispensational history of the Jewish people. These people, by their willful rejection of the commission given them of God, were cast into the sea of the nations, where, like Jonah in the belly of the fish, they were entombed, and where they shall remain until, in the agony of their sorrows, they shall cry mightily unto God. Then He will deliver them, and they shall become the foreordained channel of blessing to the Gentiles. To accept the historicity of the

book of Jonah is to come under the ban of a certain school of modern thinkers who, by their denial of it, have demonstrated their incapacity to conceive and represent the unity and significance of a past era. Destitute altogether of the historic sense, they have constituted themselves prescriptive judges of those who may possess it, so that to come under their condemnation is to receive a badge of distinction.

In reference to the future of Israel, Dr. Charles Hodge, in his *Commentary on Romans,* states plainly what he believes to be the teaching of the Apostle Paul. Concerning the words—"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (ROM. 11: 25-26)—Dr. Hodge says: "Although the interpretations given of this and the following verses are very numerous, they are all modifications of one or the other of the two following general views of the passage.

"1. Many understand the apostle as not predicting any remarkable future conversion of the Jewish nation, but merely declaring that the hardening or blinding of the nation, was not such as to prevent many Jews entering the Christian church, as long as the Gentiles continued to come in. Thus all the true Israel, embracing Jews as well as Gentiles, should ultimately be saved.

"2. The second general view supposes the apostle, on the contrary, to predict a great and general conversion of the Jewish people, which should take place when the fulness of the Gentiles had been brought in, and that then, and not till then, those prophecies should be fully accomplished which speak of the salvation of Israel. The former of these views was presented, in different forms, by the great body of the authors who lived about the time of the Reformation; who were led by the extravagancies of the Millenarians, who built much on this

passage, to explain away its prophetic character almost entirely.

"The second view has been the one generally received in every age of the church, with the exception of the period just referred to. That it is the correct interpretation, appears evident for the following reasons:

"1. The whole context and drift of the apostle's discourse is in its favor. In the preceding part of the chapter, Paul, in the plainest terms, had taught that the conversion of the Jews was a probable event, and that it would be in the highest degree beneficial and glorious for the whole world. This idea is presented in various forms; and practical lessons are deduced from it in such a way as to show that he contemplated something more than merely the silent addition of a few Israelites to the church during successive ages.

"2. It is evident that Paul meant to say, that the Jews were to be restored in the sense in which they were then rejected. They were then rejected not merely as individuals, but as a community, and therefore are to be restored as a community; see vers. 11, 15. How can the latter passage (ver. 15,) especially, be understood of the conversion of the small number of Jews which, from age to age, have joined the Christian Church? This surely has not been as 'life from the dead,' for the whole world.

"3. It is plain from this and other parts of the discourse, that Paul refers to a great event; something which should attract universal attention."

Concerning the twenty-sixth verse of the eleventh of Romans, in which Paul declares "All Israel shall be saved," Dr. Hodge goes on to say: "Israel, here, from the context, must mean the Jewish people, and *all Israel,* the whole nation. The Jews, as a people, are now rejected; as a people, they are to be restored. As their rejection, although national, did not include the rejection of every individual; so their restoration, although in like manner national, need not be assumed to include the salvation of every individual Jew. All Israel is

not therefore to be here understood to mean, all the true people of God, as Augustin, Calvin, and many others explain it; nor all the elect Jews, *i. e.*, all that part of the nation which constitutes 'the remnant according to the election of grace;' but the whole nation, as a nation." He concludes by saying: "We are, of course, bound to receive the apostle's interpretation as correct; and there is the less difficulty in this, as there is nothing in the original passage at all incompatible with it, and as it accords with the nature of God's covenant with his ancient people." *

Such, according to this able expositor, is the meaning of Paul's language in the Epistle to the Romans. The writer is not concerned now as to the details in connection with this restoration, and merely wishes to insist at the beginning that such a national restoration is demanded by the plain language of Holy Scripture.

Mr. F. W. Grant, a recent commentator of distinguished ability, commenting on the same passage in Romans, says: "There is a limit to the present blinding; there is a limit to the time of blinding altogether. When, in God's mind, the complete number of the Gentiles is brought in, Israel will, as a whole, be saved; not, as the apostle says here, by the gospel, but by the Deliverer coming, not now out of *Bethlehem,* as once He came, to be rejected; but out of *Zion.* He does not come as the Babe born to the nation any more, but as the King and Conqueror, and then it is when 'Every eye' sees Him. 'They also who pierced Him' shall see Him, and the outburst of confession on the part of the people will be the beginning of their national blessing. Enemies indeed they now are, that is, treated by God as enemies; which does not, of course, refer simply to the enmity in their heart, but that God *treats* them for what they are, enemies, as to the gospel,—while it goes out, though still the gifts and calling of God abide for them unchangeable. For us there is a solemn consideration here. How fully that which is characteristically Gentile Christianity

* *Commentary on Romans.* Pages 584-590.

has come in the minds of the vast number to be considered the whole thing, scarcely needs to be insisted on. Israel are to be saved, no doubt, but simply by the extension of the blessings of the gospel to them. Christians are that spiritual Israel, which is to bud and blossom, and fill the face of the earth with fruit. Thus the Gentiles have become, in spite of the apostle's warning against it, 'wise in their own conceits.' They have indeed thought that they bore the root, rather than the root them, and ignored the conditional footing upon which we, in common with Israel, as the professing people of God, stand. But the apostle brings it out fully here. 'Behold, then,' he says, 'the goodness and severity of God: upon those that fell, severity, but toward thee goodness, *if thou continue in His goodness,* otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.' Now *have* we—could we venture to say we have—continued in God's goodness? Who will say so? Why then do we hear so much of revival, and the need of revival, except because of the constant tendency to decline? But is it a tendency only? What does the very Reformation, which we rejoice over so much, bear witness as to the general condition of Christendom at the time in which this took place? What was that of the Romanism out of which the Protestant churches through the mercy of God emerged? Out of Rome, what could we say of the Greek and eastern churches, which God allowed to be smitten with the rod of Mohammedanism for their idolatrous abominations? To come closer home, what shall we say of the condition of the Protestant churches themselves since God broke the papal chain, and set them free? What of Unitarianism, Rationalism, and the hundreds of sects and heresies, which are the unanswerable reproach and witness against them? What are we sliding into now, which allows Romanism to-day to boast herself, however foolishly and falsely, as being the preserver of Scripture? Alas, we have not continued in God's goodness; and thus the sentence of excision is clearly upon us, 'thou shalt be cut off.' Thus when, according to Isaiah, the light shall arise again upon Israel, it will not

be merely to add new splendor to a day already bathing with its brightness the nations of the earth, but on the contrary, as he—most unaccountably according to the dreams men are indulging in—most plainly says, when '*darkness* shall cover the earth, and *gross* darkness the nations' (Chap. 60:1-3). The Gentile church is become apostate, as Paul elsewhere shows (2 THESS. 2:3-12), the true saints having been removed to heaven. How important to realize the times in which we are, and what is before us, that we do not go with the mass in the smooth ways in which they are prophesying to themselves peace, but walk in separation to God from all that is bringing in the end in judgment!" *

The various scriptural predictions respecting the restoration of Israel, and events connected therewith, will be fully taken up when the subject comes under consideration. The writer, however, is thoroughly convinced that in Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks we can find the clue which, if faithfully followed, will put us in possession of an all-important factor in the solution of the problems found in the book of Revelation. He is also convinced that Israel's history as the elect nation was temporarily suspended at the crucifixion of Christ. According to Daniel, seventy weeks measured Israel's prophetic history. At the end of the sixty-ninth week, the Messiah was "cut off" (DAN. 9:24-27). The seventieth week (or the last seven years necessary to complete the prophecy) awaits future fulfillment. If those years have run their course, the nation has not yet come into the predicted blessing, and that part of the prophecy is made void. Seven years for the national restoration of Israel, after the removal of the church from the earth, ought to be no serious tax on our belief, especially if it can be shown that all the prophecies concerning Israel are in harmony with this, nay, even demand it.

In reference to the number seven, so conspicuous everywhere, Dean Alford says: "The half of seven, three and a half, is a ruling number in the apocalyptic periods of time."

* *The Numerical Bible. In loc.*

He adds: "I have not pretended to offer any solution of these periods of time, so remarkably pervaded by the half of the mystic seven. I am quite unable to say who the two witnesses are: quite unable, in common with all apocalyptic interpreters, to point out definitely any period in the history of the church corresponding to the 1260 days of Chap 12:6, or any in the history of this world's civil power which shall satisfy the forty-two months of Chap. 13:5. As far as I have seen, every such attempt hitherto made has been characterized by signal failure. One after another, the years fixed on for the consummation by different authors have passed away, beginning with the 1836 of Bengel: one after another, the expositors who have lived to be thus refuted have shifted their ground into the safer future." Despite the difficulty encountered by "all apocalyptic interpreters," we feel assured that, when we come to consider these periods, "so remarkably pervaded by the half of the mystic seven," and see how perfectly they adapt themselves to the time of Israel's restoration, this will prove a strong argument in support of the theory advanced. It will be found further, that this is no mere "shifting of the ground into the safer future," but the recognition of a period as definitely marked off as language can make it.

Concerning the measuring of the temple, the preaching, martyrdom, and resuscitation of the two witnesses, and the great earthquake which shakes down a tenth part of the city when the remnant of the Jews repent and give glory to God, Archdeacon Farrar writes as follows: "The total failure of any Christian commentator in any age to do more than guess at the significance of these symbols, and the complete variance of the explanations suggested for them, shows that they belong to the subordinate and less essential elements of the book. If neither Irenæus the hearer of Polycarp, nor Polycarp the hearer of St. John, nor the learned schools of Alexandria and Antioch, nor Augustine, nor Jerome, nor Andreas, nor Arethas, have succeeded in throwing the least light on the definite

historic meaning of these symbols, it is impossible—and therefore must be needless—for us to do more than to try and grasp such eternal principles as they, no less than the rest of the book, consistently imply."

In reply to this it is enough to say: The failure of the early Fathers to throw any light on these symbols is no valid reason for denying their "definite historic meaning," nor does Farrar venture to suggest "the eternal principles" they imply. Daniel, in reference to predictions of this very period, says: "I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my lord, what shall be the issue of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end" (DAN. 12:8, 9. R. V.). That the words were "sealed up" *till the time of the end* would be the all-sufficient reason why the early Fathers could throw no light on them.

The restoration of Israel, after the church has been removed from the earth, suggests also a question as to the nature of the Messianic Kingdom predicted by the Old Testament prophets. It must be plain to us all that the kingdom of Christ was the theme of prophetic testimony. John the Baptist announced that kingdom as at hand with the King Himself at the door. The kingdom, as we know, was *not* set up. Our Lord was rejected, and became the nobleman of His own parable, "who went into a far country to receive a kingdom, and to *return*." The kingdom he *does* get, but not until after his return from the far country into which he has gone. That kingdom is to be established, and, we may be sure, in perfect correspondence with prophecy. In this connection the writer calls attention to the strong language employed by Dean Alford in reference to this subject.

He says: "I have ventured to speak strongly, because my conviction on it is strong, founded on the rules of fair and consistent interpretation. I mean, the necessity of accepting literally the first resurrection, and the millennial reign. It seems to me that if in a sentence where two resurrections are spoken of with no mark of distinction between them (it is

otherwise in JOHN 5:28, which is commonly alleged for the view which I am combating),—in a sentence where, one resurrection having been related, 'the rest of the dead' are afterwards mentioned,—we are at liberty to understand the former one figuratively and spiritually, and the latter literally and materially, then there is an end of all definite meaning in plain words, and the Apocalypse, or any other book, may mean anything we please. It is a curious fact that those who maintain this, studious as they generally are to uphold the primitive interpretation, are obliged, not only to wrest the plain sense of words, but to desert the unanimous consent of the primitive Fathers, some of whom lived early enough to have retained apostolic tradition on this point. Not till millennial views had run into unspiritual excesses, was this interpretation departed from."

In reference to the millennial reign of Christ he says further: "I have again and again raised my earnest protest against evading the plain sense of words, and spiritualizing in the midst of plain declarations of fact. That the Lord will come in person to this our earth: that His risen elect will reign here with Him and judge: that during that blessed reign the power of evil will be bound, and the glorious prophecies of peace and truth on earth find their accomplishment:—this is my firm persuasion, and not mine alone, but that of multitudes of Christ's waiting people, as it was that of his primitive apostolic church, before controversy blinded the eyes of the Fathers to the light of prophecy."

A premillennial advent of our Lord is, in the writer's judgment, the only theory which can be consistently maintained from whatever part of Scripture the subject may be argued. That there is an interval between the removal of the church which involves also the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and the establishing of the Millennial Kingdom, is a fact for which there is all-sufficient scriptural testimony.

The interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis accepted by the writer is by no means novel. The possibility of a

human race existing before Adam seems to have been first suggested by Isaac Peyrerius about the middle of the seventeenth century. For a statement of his views, and the controversies resulting from the publication of them, the reader is referred to the article, "Preadamite," in *The Bible Cyclopædia* of M'Clintock and Strong. In the preface to his book, *Daniel the Prophet,* the theory adopted by the writer is ably advocated by Dr. Pusey. *Earth's Earliest Ages,* by G. H. Pember, is also a most interesting volume on the whole subject. Any theory that reconciles the apparent discrepancies between the findings of science and the record of Genesis, and that can be shown to have scriptural justification, is worthy of the most serious consideration.

In reference to the two Beasts of the thirteenth chapter, which occupy a place of such controlling significance in the latter part of the book, the writer would call attention to the fact, that the *First,* and not the Second Beast, is the one in whom is most fully manifested the opposition of Satan to the establishing of the Messianic Kingdom. Interpreters differ widely as to the meaning of the symbolism employed, but it must be clear that the first Beast of Revelation is identical, in many features at least, with the fourth Beast of Daniel's vision. Daniel's fourth Beast is diverse from the first three in a way clearly exhibited, and also interpreted. In the Beast of Revelation are combined the features of the first three Beasts in Daniel's vision. The leopard, the bear, and the lion speak respectively of the Grecian, Medo-Persian, and Babylonian Empires. So far the Beast represents a polity. It must represent the form of empire found in existence when Christ returns. The mouth of a *lion* is significant. There is a manifest reference to Babylon. To the Beast "was given a mouth *speaking great things.*" It must be also clear, that so far as this Beast represents a political power, it cannot stand for antichrist, unless indeed we regard antichrist as a polity rather than a person. In Revelation there are other features given us which would seem to point clearly to an *individual* who will

be at the head of this last imperial system. This person is plainly represented by the seventh head of the Beast, which receives a death-stroke and is healed. If Daniel's fourth Beast represents the Roman Empire, as it does by the common consent of commentators, and if it is identical with this first Beast of Revelation, then we have in the entire composite figure presented in Revelation the constitutional characteristics of the last empire when it shall appear among men. It is the Roman Empire, and the imperial head of that Empire seems clearly enough to correspond with the wounded head. The writer will endeavor to show, that the rider under the first seal is identical with this imperial head; and there is reason to suppose that the *first* capital city of the revived empire will be the literal city of Rome. The temporary political overthrow of this imperial head and his subsequent rise to power seem to issue in the transfer of the royal seat to Babylon. "His mouth as the mouth of a lion" is in positive connection with Babylon, and it is the writer's own conviction that Babylon, as a *literal city,* comes before us and finds its doom in the eighteenth chapter. It is also, in his judgment, impossible to conceive of "Mystery, Babylon" in the seventeenth chapter, and "Babylon" of the eighteenth as identical. Babylon, as "the seat of the Beast," and not Rome, is evidently the last imperial city found in opposition to God and Christ.

The "little horn" of Daniel, the "willful king," "the rider" under the first seal, and the "seventh head" of the first Beast, are without doubt identical, and also represent Paul's "man of sin," or *the antichrist.*

It may be argued against such a system of interpretation, that by projecting all these events into the future, the door is thrown open for the introduction of any hypothesis that would seem to be required by exegetical necessity. In answer to this objection it may be said that very few opinions are advanced without an appeal to Scripture.

It may also be further argued against us, that a period of seven years is altogether too brief for bringing to an issue the

various events predicted. When, however, we take into consideration the fact, that during this period Satan shall be permitted to exercise his power without restraint, it will not be difficult to conceive of the vast accomplishments which shall be within the limits of his resources.

In the long and desperate conflict of the Seven Years' War for the possession of Silesia, while no change was wrought in the territorial distribution of Europe, the war is nevertheless said to have increased the moral power of Prussia tenfold, and to have given her army a prestige which it retained until the battle of Jena. It is also said to have cost Europe a million lives, and to have prostrated the strength of almost all the powers engaged in it. With this illustration of history before us, who can refuse to believe that even greater things than these can be accomplished, when the nations of the earth are plunged into war through demoniacal agency. According to our Lord it is to be a time of trouble such as the world has never seen; so fearful indeed in its nature, that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (MATT. 24:22).

It is easy enough to let the imagination run loose where only general features are set before us, but, in the following pages, the writer has only endeavored to follow faithfully the clues given by various passages of Scripture that seem to bear undoubtedly upon this time. He cannot hope to get his readers to accept every proposition presented. He, however, pleads for patient consideration of the statements made, and the Scripture produced in support of them. Though it adds very considerably to the size of the volume he has nevertheless transcribed in full the passages of Scripture referred to, in order to save the reader constant reference to the text. He has also adopted the translation given by F. W. GRANT in the last volume of *The Numerical Bible*, the work of one to whom he here pays a tribute of sincere gratitude for the constant help of invaluable suggestions. Mr. Grant's spirituality and scholarship need no defense. By faith he has given to the world a

monumental work, and "by it he being dead yet speaketh." The writings of this devout and able commentator are commended most earnestly to the student of God's Word.

The author here expresses, also, an affectionate tribute of gratitude to his friend and classmate JOHN ROBERTSON for invaluable assistance in the final preparation of this manuscript for the press.

He most sincerely appreciates, too, the service of FREDERICK A. HATCH, who, by a labor of love, has prepared not only an index of subjects treated in general, but has also tabulated the various Scripture passages that are found incorporated in the text of this volume.

Turning our attention now to the general plan of the book, we should notice that at the beginning the book declares itself to be a *prophecy*, giving assurance of blessing to those who hear and read and *keep* it. As a prophecy, it contemplates the future, going on indeed to the consummation of all things. In the study of the book we need to keep in mind the words of Peter, "That no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation," that is, no prophecy can be interpreted by *itself alone;* it must be interpreted in harmony with other prophetic utterances. It will be necessary, therefore, to have constantly before us other prophetic Scriptures. While no exhaustive study can be made of these, it will be necessary to get clearly before us certain truths, without which it will be impossible to make much progress with the book under consideration.

We are agreed that Christ was the promised Messiah of the Old Testament Scriptures. These Scriptures, being the Word of God, are the all-sufficient guarantee that every prophecy concerning Him has been, or shall yet be, fulfilled.

There is a prophecy in Isaiah, beginning with the ninth verse of the eighth chapter and ending with the seventh verse of the ninth chapter, which plainly outlines the prophetic field of Israel's history, and defines the ground so largely covered by Revelation. The prophet says:

"Make an uproar, O ye peoples, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall be brought to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us. For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A conspiracy, concerning all whereof this people shall say, A conspiracy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be in dread thereof. The Lord of hosts, him shall ye sanctify; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble thereon, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

"Bind thou up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait for the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

"And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto the wizards, that chirp and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? On behalf of the living should they seek unto the dead? To the law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them. And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass that, when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse by their king and by their God, and turn their faces upward: and they shall look unto the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and into thick darkness they shall be driven away. But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the

land of Naphtali, but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased their joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, thou hast broken as in the day of Midian. For all the armour of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgment and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this" (Is. 8:9-22, 9:1-7. R. V.).

In the fourteenth verse of the eighth chapter Christ is referred to as a "Stone of Stumbling" and a "Rock of Offence to both the houses of Israel." This was fulfilled in the rejection of Christ by the Jews. But such rejection could in no wise interfere with the development and execution of the eternal purposes. The words are: "Bind thou up the testimony, and seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait for the Lord that *hideth his face* from the house of Jacob." Though Christ *be* rejected, the eternal purposes of God shall be accomplished. The fulfillment of the prophecy *in this particular item* is the all-sufficient pledge of its further fulfillment. Immediately, in fact, we hear the prophet saying: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion." This is the verse that is commented upon in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where

the Apostle says: "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honor." He is in the company of a multitude of the redeemed of whom He says: "Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (HEB. 2:13). This declaration awaits surely a future fulfillment. It is Christ's acknowledgment of the redeemed in heaven.

Plunged in darkness by their rejection of Christ, the Jews may seek for light but in a wrong direction. The prophet continues: "When they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto the wizards, that chirp and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? On behalf of the living should they seek unto the dead? To the law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them."

If they seek for light not according to *the word they have,* there will be "no morning for them"; only the perpetual night into which they have gone, and in which they are now. As a matter of fact the rejection of Jesus brought upon the Jews, as the prophet here declares, "distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish." But there is the promise of light to follow the darkness into which they have gone. The "distress and darkness" following the rejection is yet to be taken away. "The yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder," broken, as in the day of Midian, and this blessing will come to them only through the Messiah whom they did not receive. This is evident from the concluding words of the prophet.

"Unto us," he says, "a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgment and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this." It is scarcely credible that anyone should undertake to maintain that *all* of these concluding words of the prophecy have had their

fulfillment. Christ, though having clear title to the throne of David, was never seated on it. He was born the "King of the Jews." His title, as such, was the superscription of the cross, but the scepter of David He never wielded, and the Jewish throne He never occupied.

Gabriel, announcing His birth to the Virgin, said: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (LUKE 1:31-33). This promise must find its redemption in time still future, because Christ, instead of being crowned, was rejected by the Jews and slain.

He arose from the dead and, as Mark tells us, "he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." He is on the *throne of God* now. He has *never* been on the throne of David. Nor does it answer specific Scriptures to say that the greater throne includes the lesser. The promises of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah have reference to Israel, and to a throne in Israel. Israel had to do with the earth and not with heaven. There must be, in order to make them good, a literal fulfillment of these promises here upon the earth, and this involves the return of our Lord to the world in order that He may occupy the throne of David and fulfill these promises.

That He *will* return to earth is the explicit testimony of Scripture. The second Psalm plainly declares that though rejected by Jew and Gentile He shall yet be enthroned on Zion as Israel's King.

This is a future event to which all prophecies point, and concerning which the book of Revelation has much to say.

In our study of the book we shall need to keep clearly before us the distinction between *Israel* and the *church.* Israel is not the church, nor was Israel merged into the church. Nothing but confusion can result from failing to keep this distinction clear. The promises to Israel have reference to

the earth, and to the earth only. The promises to the church are *heavenly*. By the rejection of Christ the Jews were judicially blinded and set aside. Their history was broken off, not ended, and is to be taken up and completed after the church, the body of Christ, has been fully formed.

The coming of Christ is not merely for the receiving of the church, although the church at His coming will be received unto Himself, but for the purpose of keeping pledges made to Israel. The book of Daniel is largely given to this time of national restoration. In the ninth chapter of that prophecy, we are told of seventy weeks decreed for the people of Israel "to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy" (DAN. 9:24, R. V.). Everything under contemplation here concerns *Israel* throughout. It is with these people *alone* the prophecy has to do. It points on to the time of accomplishment of all prophecy, when Israel's promises shall be made good to them, and to the anointing of the Holy Place, *i. e.*, the temple, which "the abomination that maketh desolate" has defiled. At the *end* of the seventy weeks Israel is brought into the place of full blessing. But there is a break in the predicted period. We are distinctly told that at the end of *sixty-nine weeks* the Messiah should be "cut off." This cutting off of the Messiah is, plainly enough, His rejection and death. His cross stands at the end of the *sixty-ninth week*, and manifestly there is *one week more* to complete the seventy and bring in the blessing. In the prophecy of Daniel this seventieth week is not mentioned. At the end of the sixty-ninth Messiah is cut off and has nothing. Everything is ended apparently by His death. Instead of the *blessing* expected through Him, there comes rejection and death, followed by disaster and ruin to the nation guilty of it.

But Daniel goes past the limit of the sixty-nine weeks by saying: "The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy

the city and the sanctuary" (DAN. 9:26. R.V.). This was accomplished in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. But the prophecy goes beyond the destruction of Jerusalem and says: "Even unto the end shall be war" (ver. 26).

There is nothing but trouble and desolation which goes on "*unto the end,*" and *then* the blessing is brought in. We are assured also that the blessing is brought in by the coming of the Son of Man from heaven. (DAN. 7:13-14). It follows, therefore, that this "coming of the Son of Man" *must be* at the end of the seventieth week. But the Son of Man *has not yet* come. In Daniel no mention is made of any indefinite period that might go on after the sixty-nine weeks were finished and *before* the seventieth week should begin. But the fact is, and is abundantly confirmed by Scripture, that there *is* such a period between the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth. These weeks must of necessity be weeks of *years.* In four hundred and ninety years the prophecy would be consummated. At the end of the sixty-ninth week, or after four hundred and eighty-three years, Christ was crucified. Israel came under sentence of judicial blindness as Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, declares. Their history was temporarily suspended for the execution of other purposes concerning which Daniel has nothing to say. This purpose, determined from other Scripture, is the gathering together of a company of believers in Christ to be known *here* and *eternally* as His body—the church. When this company is made up, Christ appears, and the church is taken from the earth to meet Him. The judicial blindness is then removed from Israel, now scattered upon the face of the earth, and their history is resumed and finished; that is, carried through the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy, at the end of which, Christ appears with His church, and brings in the blessings predicted by the Old Testament. In other words, time for Israel is *not counted* from the cross of Christ until His return for the church.

There may be difficulty in some minds about Christ's appear-

ing to *receive the church,* and His coming with her at the end of the seven years to establish the Messianic Kingdom. But this will be found in perfect harmony with Scriptures elsewhere that refer to the same period. Let us keep clearly in mind the distinction between the church and Israel, and many difficulties in connection with unfulfilled prophecies will vanish.

The Old Testament closes with the promise of the rising of the *Sun of Righteousness.*

The New Testament closes with the promise of the coming of the *Morning Star.*

They that are convinced of the verbal accuracy of Scripture can see a plain distinction between the rising of the Sun and the appearing of the Morning Star. The Morning Star does not bring in the day; it precedes the coming of the Sun which ushers in the day. To the church Christ will come as the Morning Star, and they that believe in Him, whether living or dead. shall be caught up to meet Him. After that, and *upon earth,* Israel's history shall be resumed and finished. We shall produce sufficient evidence to show that this period is one of seven years; in fact, the *seventieth week* of Daniel's prophecy, at the end of which Christ will come as "the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings." He will not only usher in the day, but will bring to Israel the blessings foretold by all their prophets since the world began. The Jews "shall look on Him whom they have pierced." He shall be received and honored, not only as "King of the Jews," but as "King of kings and Lord of lords." Then shall be brought to pass the prophecy of Isaiah we have considered, and the definite promise of Gabriel to the Virgin shall be made good. Christ enthroned on Mount Zion shall reign over Israel, and through Israel all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

It is the time of "the restitution of all things," of which Peter speaks in Acts, when he tells those who were guilty of the death of Christ that, if they will repent, Christ will

return from heaven and at once bring in the blessing. Infatuated with their sin, they still reject Him, and for this there can only be for them judicial blinding "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (ROM. 11:25). Then their restoration shall come, and the Messianic Kingdom shall be inaugurated.

These things will come before us for detailed consideration in the proper place.

The book, as we find in the nineteenth verse of the first chapter, divides into two parts:

I. "The things that are."

II. "The things that are about to be after these."

"The things that are" refer, plainly enough, to the things that were in John's time. The churches were in the condition represented in the seven epistles, but these exhibit also the features of a future ecclesiastical development. In fact, "the things that are" characterize the entire history of the church on earth. This history runs from the Day of Pentecost to the appearing of Christ as the "Morning Star."

This long period fills in the gap between the sixty-nine weeks and the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy.

"The things that are" are brought before us in the first three chapters of the book.

"The things that shall be after these" are found from the fourth chapter to the end.

In this second section we shall have before us a detailed account of those events which fill up the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy. It is the end of the Jewish age. Israel is once more taken up into divine favor. Eternal purposes concerning that nation are brought to a triumphant issue. God is vindicated. Israel is blessed. Christ is glorified.

In loving tribute to Dean Alford, with whom the writer has been compelled to take issue at times, but from whom so much of value has been received, the final paragraph of his *Introduction to the Book of Revelation* is here transcribed as a preface, trusting the same reverent spirit may be manifest in

this attempt to add something further to the understanding of God's blessed Word.

"I have now only to commend to my gracious God and Father this feeble attempt to explain the most mysterious and glorious portion of His revealed Scripture: and with it, this my labour of now four-and-twenty years, herewith completed. I do it with humble thankfulness, but with a sense of utter weakness before the power of His Word, and inability to sound the depths even of its simplest sentence. May He spare the hand which has been put forward to touch His Ark: may He, for Christ's sake, forgive all rashness, all perverseness, all uncharitableness, which may be found in this book, and sanctify it to the use of His Church; its truth, if any, for teaching: its manifold defect, for warning. My prayer is and shall be, that in the stir and labour of men over His word, to which these volumes have been one humble contribution, others may arise and teach, whose labours shall be so far better than mine, that this book, and its writer, may ere long be utterly forgotten.

"Amen, Come, Lord Jesus."

THE
UNFOLDING OF THE AGES

I

PROLOGUE

A Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John, who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatsoever things he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they who hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein; for the time is at hand. John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace unto you and peace from him who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him that loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in his [own] blood, and he hath made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father; to him be the glory and the might unto the ages of ages. Amen. Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and such as pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of him. Yea, amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, he who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.—(Chapter 1: 1-8.)

A REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST. —This revelation is not merely, as some have supposed, His appearing in "the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," although this is a part of it, and will come before us in the nineteenth chapter. It is a revelation of Himself, as the source and substance, without whom no revelation whatsoever could be made. It is specifically a revelation of *Jesus Christ.* These two titles, Jesus, the Saviour, and Christ, the Messiah, are quite distinct. The significance of both may be seen in the name given by Pha-

raoh to Joseph. Zaphnath-paaneah is interpreted by the rabbins, "Revealer of Secrets"; and there is no reason for arbitrarily dismissing this if it can be reasonably shown to have that meaning in the Hebrew. As an Egyptian word, it is rendered by Jerome, "The Saviour of the World."

Joseph, exalted over Egypt, and finally bringing relief to his *brethren,* is the Old Testament picture of Christ in Revelation. Through Him God is lifting the veil from the face of the future, that we may know more fully "the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself, for the administration of the fulness of times, to head up all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth" (EPH. 1:9-10 Gr.).

We have then to do with the revelation of Him as the Messiah promised to Israel, and as the Saviour of the world.

A *revelation* does not mean something hidden, or concealed, or even difficult to understand. The title itself is a rebuke to them that speak of the book as an insoluble enigma. If God has made a revelation, who shall charge Him with putting it before us in an obscure and unintelligible way? Let us be assured that God has ability to make plain what He designs to reveal. If He does not speak in the plain language of man, it is because the revelation was not made to man in common. Man, as man naturally, cannot have any perception of its meaning. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 COR. 2:14). In this respect the book of Revelation does not differ from other books of Scripture. The apostle Paul declares that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 TIM. 3:16-17).

The important fact, that Scripture is given, as here stated, *to furnish the man of God,* has been well emphasized by another writer. Whatever other intention Scripture may have,

this is certainly a thing not to be ignored. Surely the Bible was not written to gratify idle curiosity. In the book of Revelation God has not taken down the veil that men may peer idly into the future. Here, as elsewhere, Scripture is true to its own purpose, and our lack of perception may be due to our inability to measure up to the standard required of "the man of God."

That this revelation, which God gave to Jesus Christ, was in order to the showing of it unto His servants, is expressly affirmed. It is revealed, therefore, in language which only His *servants* can read. If the book be put aside on the ground of its obscurity and depth, the straitness, we may be assured, is not with God. For anyone to say it is written in language beyond the possibility of interpretation, is to bear witness against himself, as not being true to the character of those to whom the revelation is made.

Nor can responsibility be evaded on the ground of any apparent difficulty. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (ROM. 8:9). Having the Spirit of Christ implies having the key to the meaning of *all* Scripture. "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 COR. 2:9-10). Without this help of the Holy Spirit, any attempt to search out the deep things of God must end in total failure.

There is need, first of all, that our own hearts be searched in order to determine whether we are really "men of God," and "servants of Christ." If we are, then this book comes as a revelation to us, and we must not charge God with the folly of giving a *revelation* in language and terms impossible to unravel.

These things are sent and signified by an angel to John. It is a book of visions, but not merely of dreams.

The important thing to be considered is not the signs, but

the things signified. That the visions come thus in signs and symbols is an indication in itself that they are intended for a special class. Had God designed to reveal His mind to all men alike, He would have written in the common language of men, but the design is, not to speak to all men alike, but to such as are "servants of Christ," and for the blessed purpose of furnishing the man of God "unto all good works."

If these things seem to us mysterious, with heavy veils before them, we are yet encouraged to look into them with all confidence and discover what we can of the will of God. The least discovery of this must, of necessity, be glory.

The blessing is promised not merely to those who read and hear the words of the prophecy, but to those who *keep* the things which are written therein. Therefore he that expects to understand what is written must enter upon the study with sincere purpose of heart to keep what is revealed.

God is not merely pointing out the path of the future; He is doing more than that; He is giving equipment to those who have a purpose of heart to walk in that path.

We have before us in full survey the entire field of the future, and what is revealed is for the purpose of qualifying us to walk in the path opened up.

The vast confusion that has arisen from the study of this book, and the many tongues of interpretation, alike testify against us, and bear witness to the very limited faculty we have of making our own what God would yet have us know. We are stimulated to this study, because it has to do with things which "must shortly come to pass"; things which began in John's own day and continue on until, in the closing chapters, we are face to face with eternity in all its reality. These are the things of which the book speaks; things which stretch on from the time when John was in Patmos to the time when the books are opened at the great white throne of God, and to the dawn of eternity which immediately follows. We are ourselves *somewhere* in this vast unfolding of things. Just where, it may be difficult to determine, but somewhere we

surely are, and it is of the utmost importance for us to discover, if we can, where and what we are in the development of the eternal purposes of God.

Before going further, the mode of communication of the revelation should have consideration. Christ speaks not directly, but through an angel. This method carries us back to the book of Daniel which is so closely related to the book before us. There, too, angels are the medium of communication.

The ministry of angels is frequent in, and characteristic of, Old Testament history. They appear also on the threshold of the New, announcing Christ's birth to the Virgin, and giving direction to the shepherds of Bethlehem.

During the life of Jesus on earth they are in reserve, but they reappear after the crucifixion and take charge of the Lord's body. They also announce from the Mount of Olives the return of Jesus from heaven. They did not proclaim, except initially, salvation to man. An angel may direct Cornelius to Peter, but Peter gives the message which brings salvation to Cornelius.

All is different in the book of Daniel, where angels are active throughout. When Daniel wrote, the Jewish people were in captivity, and the " times of the Gentiles " had begun. Daniel's prophecy goes beyond the captivity and the partial restoration, and beyond the cross to the end of the Jewish age. He knew nothing of the Christian age in which we now are. He speaks of a time still future, and of a period of blessing for Israel which is to be brought about by " the coming of the Son of man from heaven."

Daniel and Revelation have much in common, as the mediatorial service of angels in both books suggests, and this fact will be found to be exceedingly helpful. We are surveying the time of Israel's restoration to blessing which can be brought about only by the revelation of the Son of man from heaven.

If God has been pleased to disclose His mind as to these things, who shall say Him nay? Or who shall deny the power

of this truth for sanctification? "If any man willeth to do his will," says Jesus, "he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself" (JOHN 7:17 R. V.). If we have an honest purpose *to do* the will of God when revealed, we may be sure of being led through all seeming intricacies into the clear light.

Nor need we confine ourselves to any *particular* theory of interpretation. All we need to do is to look carefully and prayerfully at whatever comes before us in orderly sequence. We shall find that if everything be not clear, neither is everything altogether dark. Necessarily for the present, "we see through a glass, darkly"; as yet, we are not "face to face." These things come before us, so the apostle declares, as riddles to be solved, so far as solution is possible. Again, we need to emphasize the fact, that the limitation in the power of solution is not with God but with us. Just to the extent of our being under the control of the Spirit, may we hope to enter into these things with Him before whom all is light.

If we cannot get every detail of the picture, we can surely come into possession of its general features, and nothing but blessing can accrue to us in getting an apprehension of what the will and purpose of God is. Believing then, that this is a revelation to them who are the servants of Christ, let us, as the servants of Christ, seek and find what is revealed.

The salutation is given to the "seven churches which are in Asia." These were doubtless established by Paul's evangelistic labors there. To each of these seven churches John is directed to send a message, but the individual members of these churches are not, necessarily, they to whom the revelation is made. The revelation is made to John, and to them like him who are the servants of Christ. The messages to the churches are but a part of the revelation.

The letters were sent primarily to these churches as they existed in John's day. These local churches have long since passed away, but the meaning of the letters is certainly not exhausted in any local application. The condition described

in each particular case was true, doubtless, of the local church. But there must be in the letters a meaning applicable to all time or, at least, as long as there is a Church on earth.

After the same manner, Paul's epistles were addressed to special localities, but the truth contained in them is for all time.

These epistles to the seven churches are equally a part of the inspired Word of God. Specifically also are they a part of this particular revelation which is now before us.

Again and again we have the solemn reiteration:—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The truth contained in the letters did not cease to exist when the churches to which they were addressed became extinct. As other epistles apply to the Church of all times and all circumstances, so do these.

We shall have abundant reason to believe that the entire history of the Christian Church on earth was within the range of vision when these letters were written. They are, in fact, an epitome of Church history. They cover the whole ground from the day of "first decline" in apostolic times to the Second Coming of Christ. They exhibit, clearly enough, features not only existing at the time, but continuing on while the Church remains as a witness for Christ on earth.

Because this is so, these letters have an important and solemn application to us, as well as to those to whom they were primarily written.

We have, first of all, the salutation "to the seven churches which are in Asia" and, for reasons given already, a salutation to ourselves also. It is a salutation of "grace and peace." "Being justified by faith," says the apostle, "we have peace" (ROM. 5:1). But *faith* implies *grace*. The principle of faith is always in contrast with the legal principle. Righteousness, however, is the foundation of all peace. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Is. 57:21). The law proves that Jew and Gentile are alike destitute of righteousness and under bondage to sin. Grace, we know,

reigns *through righteousness;* and, if man be found without it, if he be guilty and with no claim whatsoever upon God, then there can be no peace for him except, indeed, it be brought in by the way of grace. Thank God, we know where true righteousness is found; it is in Christ alone. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God," not through any righteousness of our own, but "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (ROM. 5:1). Thus grace reigns through righteousness, and is ministered to us, bringing with it unchangeable peace which abides on this unchangeable foundation. "Grace and peace," then, *come to us,* and their value is the more clearly discerned when we consider from whom they come. They are "from him who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth."

The expression, "Who is, and who was, and who is to come," defines for us, in a limited way of course, the meaning of the name Jehovah. At the burning bush, Moses asked for His name, and the answer to this was, "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex. 3:14). This is what the word Jehovah means. He is the Self-Existent One, unchangeably such, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. As He is, so has He ever been, and so shall He ever be throughout all the ages of ages. Let man be what he will; with Jehovah God there is no change. Blessed for us indeed is this truth in the light of that fuller revelation of Him as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (EPH. 1:3).

The salutation is not alone from the Father, but "from the seven spirits which are before his throne." The number seven is here, as elsewhere, the number that stands for perfection. The expression used brings before us the Holy Spirit in the perfection of His energy as connected with the throne. These words suggest what is written in prophetic reference to Christ: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might,

the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Is. 11:2).

The lamps in the sanctuary had a central stem, out of which there sprang six others, three on either side. This central stem with its six branches would make possible the manifestation of the sevenfold energy spoken of by the prophet.

In Isaiah this perfection of energy is spoken of in connection with Christ. In Him was manifest this sevenfold, complete energy of the Spirit. These suggestive words, then, bring before us the Holy Ghost in all the fullness of His energy. He is before the throne. It is the throne of God, and therefore of holiness, omnipotence, and wisdom. From such a throne comes to us the salutation of "grace and peace."

It is not only from Jehovah the Father, and the Holy Spirit, but also from "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth." Here the language is plain and needs no interpretation, but just because it is plain, there is a possibility of our losing the depth of its meaning. It is from "Jesus Christ" in whom all this revelation centers, and without whom none could be possible. He is with the Father and the Spirit united in this word of grace and peace to us. He is before us here as "the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead."

Death, with its dark shadow over the earth, is the penalty of sin. From the beginning sin has reigned, and, as the apostle says, unto death; and it was into *death* Christ went. Not for Himself; for death had no claim on Him. For us He endured death. He died, but whatever this death involved, He came out of it, and was received back into glory. He is thus the "firstborn from the dead." The very words "firstborn" have in them the blessed implication of others.

Christ is not only "firstborn from the dead"; He is "the firstborn among many brethren" (ROM. 8:29). Into death He went, spoiling principalities, and powers, and when from death He ascended, "He led captivity captive" (EPH. 4:8).

That is, He led a multitude of captives captive to Himself. Death which could not hold Him can no longer hold them for whom He endured it. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 COR. 15:55-57).

In this glorious character, as Saviour from death, He joins with the Father and with the Spirit in this salutation of grace and peace. But even this is not all. He is *The Ruler* of the kings of the earth.

The kings of the earth were in compact against Him when He was here. To this fact Scripture testified before He came. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed" (Ps. 2:2). To the fulfillment of these words Peter refers on the Day of Pentecost. The kings of the earth combined against Him, but in vain. Herod and Pontius Pilate, the representative heads of Jew and Gentile, if they could not unite on any other ground, could unite in opposition to Him. But it was all in vain. God's decree stood: "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion" (Ps. 2:6).

Christ was received up into heaven, and took His seat at the right hand of God. He shall yet come to occupy His own throne, and when He comes, He shall be owned as "the King of kings and Lord of lords." In this character He speaks to us here. He is "the ruler of the kings of the earth."

Thus, we see, the salutation comes from the fullness of the glorious Godhead, and no wonder there is from them to whom it comes this responsive burst of praise: "To him that loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, and he hath made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father; to him be the glory and the might unto the ages of ages. Amen." The word here is *loveth,* not loved. The love of Christ is not of a character to be expressed in the

past tense. It is the love which abides in immutable strength as He abides in His manifestation of it.

In the energy of His love He wrought for us, and the shedding of His blood for the remission of our sins is His estimate of the value we are to Him. Thus loosed from our sins by His blood we become not kings and priests merely, but are constituted a kingdom and, as individuals of that kingdom, priests to His God and Father. This surely is the "holy priesthood" of which the apostle Peter speaks. This is what Israel might have been, but failed so signally in becoming. All Christians, therefore, and not a privileged sacerdotal class, may draw near, as no priest under the Levitical system—not even the high priest—could do. With the exception of Christ, our High Priest, the New Testament recognizes no official priest, but plainly declares that all believers are privileged to approach God. The possibility of Israel becoming a kingdom of priests was conditioned on their obedience to the law; whereas our standing as priests is established by the perfect obedience of Christ in our behalf. His obedience was for all believers and this puts the self-styled priest, where he belongs, on a level with all believers.

Do we sufficiently appreciate this place of nearness into which divine grace has brought us? Are we manifesting the purity suitable to such a profession? Justified by faith, we have not only peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, but by Him also we have access into this grace wherein we stand; and this grace ought to be the strongest, as it is the only effective plea against unholiness. Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound and pleads for the denial of "ungodliness and worldly lusts," and exhorts us to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (TIT. 2:12-14). Did we measure up to this, how our hearts would

join in the glad ascription of glory and might unto Him unto the ages of ages!

Only as we practically manifest a character corresponding to the place which this grace has established for us, shall we be in a position to give out truthful testimony concerning Him. In Revelation the recognition of redemption constituting a priesthood of all believers is followed by the testimony: "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and such as pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of him."

There is no uncertain sound in this testimony. There is no failure here to tell out the whole truth; no fear of man to restrain its utterance. What has become of this blessed hope of apostolic days? What is it that restrains us from bearing witness to the truth of our Lord's return to earth? Is it because there has been confusion of thought, or diversity of opinion? However much of diversity of opinion there may be as to details connected with this event, there can be none surely as to the essential truth itself. Christ is coming! This fact is in all our evangelical creeds, and yet how little we hear of it! Theme after theme is taken up and discussed, but as to this profound silence reigns. If we were living, as we ought, abreast with our profession, and as priests in intimate relationship with God, would this proclamation be of so startling a character? Why is it, that from so many pulpits where Bible themes and truths are presented, this blessed truth is given no recognition? Even where it is given some little place, it is done almost with an apology. There is neither apology nor reserve here. "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." He shall come in visible glory from the invisible glory where He now is "and every eye shall see him, and such as pierced him." These words carry us back to the prophecy of Zechariah, where Israel is seen in full repentance before Him, who "was wounded" in the house of His friends. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn

for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem" (ZECH. 12:10-11). "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (ZECH. 13:1).

This appearance foretold by the prophet is without question the one announced here in the book of Revelation. The Jews are viewed as being upon the scene once more. They that "pierced him" shall look upon Him. Then, and not till then, shall the fountain be opened for sin and uncleanness. Then, and not till then, shall the many promises of the Old Testament concerning Israel be brought to pass. Israel has a part to play in the future, which we cannot lightly pass over without doing violence to the entire structure of sacred prophecy.

This appearance of Christ is not for the Church, but for the restoration of Israel to blessing. The Church will be gone from the earth before this day is ushered in. When *He* appears, we also shall "appear with him in glory" (COL. 3:4). To appear with Him in glory necessitates our being *with* Him before the glory dawns. They that are asleep in Jesus shall be raised, and we that are alive and remain shall be changed and caught up with them, that we may all come together with Him. (1 THESS. 4:13-18).

Ignore this truth, as we may; yet God will not ignore it, and the clear and explicit testimony found here in Revelation is subscribed by a "*Yea, amen.*"

Another voice proclaims this. It is the voice of Him who declares Himself as follows: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, he who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." Thus God seals with His own affirmation this testimony.

It is the same Jehovah speaking here who gave us the words of salutation. It is the unchangeable God, and, withal, "the Almighty," who is fully competent to fulfill His own word. To this He has pledged Himself. So when Christ comes, "in

the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," it is also the revelation of "the glory of his Father." Let men turn away, if they will, from this proclamation; yet God will put His own seal upon it: for the testimony is true. Christ is coming, both for judgment and for blessing, and to the announcement there is subscribed the "Yea, amen" of God. The decree of the second Psalm has yet to be fulfilled. Man's day upon the earth must come to a close. The night of sorrow must yield to the morning that shall break without a cloud. Israel, scattered among the nations, is not cast off forever. Out of Zion is to come the Deliverer who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and, by this manifestation of divine power in his behalf, Jacob shall be transformed into Israel. He shall answer to his name. All this shall be brought to pass, not because of what man is, or because of what man can do, but because it is the "Yea, amen" of God.

Thus the coming of Christ is the world's *only* hope, but how blessed that hope! To this, and the attending glories, our attention shall be turned in these pages, and to be occupied with Christ after this fashion is in itself glory for us here. After the salutation, with its responsive voice and testimony, there is opened to us the first vision of the book.

II

THE GOLDEN LAMPSTANDS

I John, your brother and joint-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus, was in the island that is called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus. I became in [the] Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest write in a book, and send [it] to the seven churches: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice which was speaking with me; and having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like unto [the] Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white as white wool, as snow, and his eyes as a flame of fire; and his feet were like fine brass, as if they were burning in a furnace; and his voice was as the sound of many waters; and he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in its strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead; and he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one. And I was dead, and behold I am alive unto the ages of the ages; and I have the keys of death and of hades. Write, therefore, what thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things that are about to be after these; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest upon my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands. The seven stars are angels of the seven churches; and the seven lampstands are seven churches.—(Chapter 1:9-20.)

JOHN is in the island that is called Patmos, and he tells us how he came to be there. It was for "the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus." He was not there by any choice of his own. He was an outcast from the world, because he was true to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus. Jesus, before him, had been banished from the world. John, because of his loyalty to Jesus whom the world would not have, is driven into exile. If he be shut out from

the world, he is thus the more shut in to God. The place of his banishment becomes the place of vision and the display of divine glory.

The attitude of the world toward Jesus is not changed, and they that have fellowship with Him must of necessity feel conscious of this, and be willing to walk apart with Him.

One may be true to Christ without open rejection, but the value of his testimony to the world will depend upon his attitude toward it. If circumstances are such as to make open rejection impolitic, he may count always upon a secret hostility that may be even more insidious and dangerous. The world is always demanding of the Christian either alliance or open war. Men may attempt to mark off neutral territory between Christ and the world, but there is in fact *none*. Of John's loyalty to Jesus there is no question, and because of it the world sends him into banishment. The rockbound shores of Patmos cannot separate John from God, nor limit the sphere of his testimony. His exile from the world gives him power over it.

When Isaac went *out* of the land of the Philistines, his testimony had weight with them. The same necessity is upon the servants of Christ to-day. Separation is the secret of power in testimony.

John here identifies himself with those whom he is addressing. He is "brother and joint-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus." For the servants of Christ, tribulation is ordained as part of the path. The "tribulum"—whence the word tribulation—was a *flail* to separate the wheat from the chaff. Paul says: "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (ROM. 5:3-5). "In the world," says Jesus, "ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (JOHN 16:33). This is the path that leads to glory, and all true followers of

Christ are on it. At the same time we are in "the kingdom of Jesus"; not in "his kingdom and *glory*," which is yet to be manifested, but in His "kingdom and patience." This speaks of the time in which we are now living. It is the time of Christ's patience, and is to be ended by His manifestation in glory. If, in this time of His patience, we are exiled from the glist of the world, it is but the testimony of our identification with Christ now, and assures us of a part in the coming kingdom of glory. Meanwhile the place of banishment may become radiant with the revelation of the glory of God.

On "the Lord's day," the Spirit lays hold of John for the purpose of revealing the mind of God. It was a special anointing for the special purpose in view.

"The Lord's day" is, doubtless, the first day of the week; the day that marked His triumph over death by resurrection, the seal of His accomplished work for us. Some have strangely confused this Lord's day with *the day of the Lord* at the end of the age. According to this idea, John was carried in spirit to the day of the Lord's manifestation. If the day of the Lord had been intended, it would have been so *expressed*. Men persist in confusing what Scripture nevertheless keeps distinct. The Lord's day is Sunday, the first day of the week, and the Spirit is not John's spirit, but the Holy Spirit.

John is filled with the Holy Spirit and the ages unfold before him. First a commission is given to him. A voice, like the sound of a trumpet, bids him: "Write in a book" what he sees, and send it to the seven churches in Asia. Turning back to see the voice he is given the first vision. "Seven golden lampstands" appear before him, and these are declared to be "seven churches."

Lampstands are of course for the night. While the day lasts, they are needless. Jesus said: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (JOHN 9:4-5).

Christ has been banished from the world, and the night will continue until He comes again. Meanwhile the Church is to be a testimony for Him upon the earth. This is the plain significance of the words: "Ye are the light of the world" (MATT. 5:14).

The lampstands, seven in number, represent the corporate and complete testimony for Christ on earth during His absence from it. "In the midst of the lampstands," John sees, "one like unto the Son of man." He is clothed in the robe of a priest, and girt about with a golden girdle. The hair, which is "white as white wool, as snow," tells naturally enough of wisdom which is supposed to be acquired by the length of days. Under a similar description one is spoken of by Daniel as "the Ancient of days." The purity of the whiteness testifies to the absolute perfection of wisdom which is His.

His eyes are spoken of as "a flame of fire." With eyes like that He is looking at the seven churches, His representatives on earth, and searching them through and through.

In his right hand were seven stars and "out of his mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shineth in its strength." This description exhibits and represents no other than Christ Himself. He is standing in the midst of the churches, searching them out, and giving His full estimate of them.

The symbolic language is easily understood. Take for example the expression, "Out of his mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword." The same expression is used in the nineteenth chapter where Christ is seen coming in judgment. "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp [two-edged] sword, that with it he may smite the nations." After the beast and the false prophet are consigned to the burning lake, the rest are "slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which [sword] proceeded out of his mouth; and all the birds were filled with their flesh" (REV. 19:21). The sword is the well-known symbol of the Word. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing

even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (HEB. 4:12).

The execution of judgment upon the remnant is with the *sword*. This judgment is according to the *word*. Jesus says: "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (JOHN 12:47-48). So also at the great white throne, judgment is according to *the books*.

At sight of Him John falls at His feet "as dead," but He lays "his right hand" (the hand which held the stars) upon John saying, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one. And I was dead, and behold I am alive unto the ages of the ages; and I have the keys of death and of hades."

In these words He declares Himself in terms apart from all symbolic language. Out of *death* He has come to be alive "unto the ages of the ages." He has come out of it also in absolute victory over it, holding, as here affirmed, "the keys of death and of hades."

"Hades" is the Greek word for the Hebrew "sheol." These words are the same in meaning. Sheol in the Old Testament, and hades in the New, define the abode of the departed spirits of the dead. The bodies of the dead were consigned to the grave. The spirit always went to sheol or hades prior to the death of Christ who, in the language of the Apostles' creed, "descended into hades." His Spirit went to the realm of the spirits of them who had died before Him. This abode of disembodied spirits was separated by a great gulf. On the one side of it were the spirits of the justified; on the other were the spirits of the impenitent.

Christ, entering hades, delivered the spirits of the justified, and they are now with Him. When He ascended on high He led captivity captive. (EPH. 4:8, Marg.) In the Scripture

before us He appears as the ascended One, holding in His hand the *keys* of hades. Sheol and hades are no longer the abode of the spirits of the righteous dead. When the Christian dies he departs to be with Christ. (PHIL. 1:23. 2 COR. 5:8).*

As the Risen One, having title to speak, He says to John: "Write, therefore, what thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things that are about to be after these."

These words, as before stated, indicate the proper division of the book.

"The things that are" come before us in the seven letters to the churches.

In these letters are exhibited the moral features of the Church from the point of first departure in Ephesus until the Second Coming of Christ. This statement will be confirmed when the letters are considered in detail.

In the last four messages the coming of Christ is distinctly announced. What gives character to these four will be found existing therefore when Christ comes.

The first division will carry us through the entire history of the Church on earth.

The second division, "the things that are about to be after these," has to do mainly with the restoration of Israel, and the keeping of Old Testament pledges respecting Israel and the earth. It goes beyond this, as will appear, but this is the central theme in this second division of the book. Israel, and God's purposes respecting Israel, are kept constantly before us, and the other nations and various opposing forces are viewed as they come in connection with the execution of these purposes. In the second division there lies open before us the whole field of prophecy. There is throughout an obvious connection with Old Testament predictions, and our interpretation must be in full harmony with them. Discordant notes are evidence of error. The failure to observe this is

* For an exhaustive statement concerning the local habitation of departed spirits the reader is referred to the very able *Excursus on Hades,* by the American Editor, in Lange's *Commentary.*

responsible for the many misapplications of Old Testament prophecies.

The burden of keeping the Church on the scene throughout is heavier than any school of interpreters can bear and accounts for the hopeless confusion into which the book of Revelation has been thrown. The view taken in these pages must find its vindication in Scripture, and abundant testimony will be furnished in support of it.

Whatever of failure there may be on the part of the Church as a whole, the "seven stars," which are the messengers to the churches, are held firmly in the right hand of Him who stands in judgment over all. The Church may fail. It *surely will* as the witness for Christ here, but *individuals* may remain true to Him, and they shall be upheld by "the right hand" of his righteousness.

To the letters themselves our attention is now turned. In each of them there is the solemn admonition, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." In each of them, also, there is a promise to the overcomer. In the first three, the promise to the overcomer follows the admonition to hear; in the last four, the admonition follows the promise. In the last four, also, mention is made of the Coming of the Lord, which event is not referred to in the first three. These things are without doubt significant.

The characteristic features described in the last four letters will be found manifest in the Church when the Lord comes.

There is, beyond all peradventure, an historical development from Ephesus to Thyatira. This development is moreover one of spiritual decline. The down-grade, with the exception of Smyrna, is persistent until Thyatira is reached. In Thyatira is the culmination of everything that has gone before. Thyatira is Rome in full embryo, and its evolution goes on until, in the second division of the book, it appears as "Mystery, Babylon." Remaining, after all true believers are taken from the earth, it is finally found seated on the back of the Beast. The papal dream shall have its brief period of reality, and

then judgment without mercy shall overwhelm the whole system. This is the woman that terms herself a prophetess, but is in reality "Jezebel." To this church in Thyatira is given the first announcement of the Lord's return.

Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea represent conditions effected by a revolt from what is manifest in Thyatira. These last three also continue on in moral character to the end, so that, when Jesus comes, individuals in the Church will be found connected with one or other of the phases exhibited in these last four churches.

These things will come before us more clearly as we take up the letters in order.

III

THE LOSS OF FIRST LOVE

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:—These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. I know thy works and thy labor, and thine endurance, and that thou canst not bear evil men; and thou hast tried those who say that they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars; and thou hast endurance and hast borne for my name's sake, and hast not wearied. But I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do the first works; but if not, I am coming unto thee, and will remove thy lampstand out of its place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.—(Chapter 2: 1-7.)

THE church *in* Ephesus, and not *of,* as in the common version, is brought under examination in this first letter. It is directed to the *angel* of the church, and this is without doubt significant. The moral condition in Ephesus is set before us in clear and concise language. If these letters exhibit historical phases of the Church in general, then the letter to the angel in Ephesus is a typical picture of the spiritual decline and departure from God which was painfully manifest even in the days of Paul. To the elders of this very church Paul gave warning of the coming apostasy. He said to them: "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20: 29-30). The apocalyptic letter tells us how literally Paul's prediction came to pass. The evil, which so quickly overwhelmed the Church, did not come altogether from with-

out, but manifested itself in the perversion of truth within the walls. But this was not confined to Ephesus. Paul gave the Corinthians the same warning, and the church in Ephesus represents the general moral condition.

The *Church,* as Paul most plainly declares, is "the body of Christ." This body is made up of all true believers, whether living upon the earth, or asleep in Christ. Individual believers, wherever found, are members of that one body. Christ's body is not made up of *churches* in various places, but of members.

When a church in a certain locality is spoken of, as here, "the church in Ephesus," it means a company of believers, united together for the purpose of worship and service. In this restricted sense we may speak of "the church" as existing in different localities.

The Church is the representative of Christ on earth; the church in Ephesus would, therefore, be the representative of Christ in that particular place.

After the same manner we speak of the church "in Corinth," or of the church "in Colosse." All the epistles are addressed after this manner to churches in definite regions. Conditions might exist, where Christians were organized for work and worship, that might give rise to the necessity of some special communication to meet local needs. Such a state existed in Corinth which necessitated the Corinthian letters.

We may be absolutely sure that no apostolic letters that were designed to be a part of Divine Revelation could, by any possibility, have exhausted their meaning in the local application. What is preserved for us in Scripture is for the Church of all times, and in all localities.

It is important to observe that the communication in every case is addressed to the *angel* of the church. We find no such address in any other apostolic epistle.

Who, then, is meant by the *angel* to whom, in each case, the message is sent?

"It is not very easy for an English reader," says the *Pulpit Commentary,* "to understand, to what office in the Church such an expression can refer. The various meanings of bishop, overseer, pastor and messenger have been assigned."

The same *Commentary* speaks of certain offices in the early Christian church, which were copied from existing offices in the Jewish synagogue. The characteristics of the one holding such an office are then given us, and we are warned against "disputation," because we have now no such officer in any of the main forms of church government.

It may be possible that there were, in the early days of the Church, men that acted as leaders of worship, and expounders of truth, to whom the term "angel" may have been applied. But the questions remain, Does the word *angel* refer to such officers? Is there any corresponding official class in the Church now? Could the modern pastor or bishop be intended?

The word angel is a Greek one, defining another Hebrew word that means "a messenger." It may signify an ordinary messenger, or may apply to prophet or priest as in the Old Testament. But to whom does it apply as used here? It is natural enough, as things exist to-day, to think of a diocesan bishop, or pastor of a given church, and this in fact is the common interpretation of it. The "angel," whoever he be, is spoken of as in connection with the local church. Is he any official of the Church?

If so, these addresses are altogether exceptional. In every other instance communications are sent to "the saints in Christ Jesus." So Paul writes to the Romans, "to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." In the same way other letters are addressed. It is never to anyone in ecclesiastical control, but to *all* believers in Christ. In this letter to Ephesus and in the following letters the *angel* is addressed, and he is held responsible, and rebuked for existing conditions. We do not for a moment believe that this could be rightly affirmed of any official class.

It is true there have been given to the Church "apostles,

prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers." Such are endowed with gifts to be used for the edification of "the body of Christ," which is the Church. They might labor in various fields, but they could hardly with justice be held responsible for the spiritual condition of those to whom they ministered.

It would be difficult to convince ourselves that these addresses to the seven churches were sent to any official class of this kind, provided we were obliged to think also that they could be charged with the spiritual condition found there. It would seem almost certain, then, that these "angels" are not official representatives.

The "seven stars," first seen held in the right hand of Christ, are, afterwards, declared to be the "angels" of the churches. Stars are heavenly bodies; they shine in heavenly places, and the night brings them into view.

The Christian calling is *heavenly* both in character and in inheritance. May not these stars represent those who are held responsible for exhibiting the light of Christ during His absence, to shine through the night until He comes again?

In this connection, it is interesting to remember God's promise to Abram concerning seed.

"The Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered" (GEN. 13:14-16).

Afterward, Abram said to God: "Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him,

So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (GEN. 15:3-6).

The "dust of the earth" and the "stars of the sky" are not the same, and God does not waste words. The word of God confirms to Abram an *earthly* and also an *heavenly* seed.

To *Isaac* God said: "Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (GEN. 26:3-4).

To *Jacob,* when he slept at Bethel, God said: "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (GEN. 28:13-14).

These promises are kept distinct. They are never interchanged. Isaac and Jacob were to be progenitors of *different* seed.

The epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of Abraham, to whom the original promise was made, says: "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the *stars of the sky* in multitude, and as the *sand which is by the sea shore* innumerable" (HEB. 11:12). To him this *double* issue was to be confirmed.

The Jewish people were the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, redeeming the promise of an earthly seed.

But we also, according to the apostle Paul, are "children of Abraham," by faith in Christ Jesus, redeeming the promise of an heavenly seed. *Believers in Christ,* whether Jew or Gentile, are the "starlike" seed of Abraham.

The local, visible church may be made up of true believers in Christ together with such as make a mere nominal profes-

sion. The Church in external form, as we find in the thirteenth of Matthew, is represented by a wheat-field, mingled with tares. The difference between the "visible" and the "invisible" church is easily recognized.

The church in Ephesus was doubtless like churches in other places. The true and the false would be mingled together. May not the angels (stars) represent the *true believers* there, thus constituting the heavenly seed of Abraham? The "seven stars," we are told, *are* the "seven angels." They are held "in the right hand" of Him, who is passing judgment on what He finds there.

Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one *pluck them out of my hand.*" That hand is too high for any such seizure. In the midst of all that is false in the professing church, they that are *true* to Christ are held secure in His right hand. It is only to such indeed that any address could be properly made. When John is instructed to write to "the angel" of the church in Ephesus, or to "the angel" in the other churches, and these angels are the "stars" spoken of, have we not here a key to the meaning of the term as used in this connection? So much is clear, at any rate, and gives to the letters an application to all true believers in Christ. It would be useless to appeal to any others. The application is to such as make a true confession of faith. "The seven stars are angels of the seven churches; and the seven lampstands are seven churches."

While there is a difference indicated here, there is also a manifest connection. The angels are viewed as related to the church, but, as we have seen, they constitute the *true* in contrast with the false. The lampstands represent the so-called visible church. The stars are the true believers in it.

To the church in Ephesus Christ presents Himself as One "that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who

walketh in the midst of the seven golden lampstands." The stars shine with heavenly light, and are sustained in the shining by the Lord Himself.

Now a lampstand is not a light but is set for its display: so the Church is not a light giver, but a light bearer. The gold of which the lampstands are made is the common symbol of the divine glory. The wail of the prophet over the sins of Zion is applicable to us. "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street" (LAM. 4:1). The angels are held responsible for the giving out of the light for which the lampstands exist, and Christ is represented as walking "in the midst of the seven lampstands" for the obvious purpose of discovering their true condition in order to the passing of judgment.

First of all He speaks of what He finds there upon which He can set the seal of His approval. "Works" there were, and laborious works too, and manifest endurance, as well as repudiation of evil men. There was no toleration of *evil* wherever it was recognized as such.

They had met also the pretension of some, who claimed to be apostles and were not; they had tested them, and found them to be "liars." Thus early came into the Church the foreshadowing of what would so surely follow. What untold evil has come in because of the unfounded claim of apostolical succession! Had not Paul warned them against this? He everywhere proclaimed that his credentials were from Christ in heaven. Peter, as *primate,* with a long list of successors in office is a doctrine that no one ever found in the Word of God. This false assertion is an evil of gigantic proportions, and originated here in Ephesus with those men that claimed to be apostles and were not. High pretensions of this kind, however, did not carry away the faithful in Ephesus. Those who said they were apostles were tried and proved false, and the Ephesians are commended for this as well as for their unwearied endurance.

But over against this, there comes in the solemn word: "I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love."

The word "somewhat," found in our common version, is not in the text. It is no *little* thing of which the Lord is speaking, but the very root from which sprang all the evil that afterward overran the Church. Outwardly, perhaps, there may have been no indication of the evil which had already begun its deadly work, but the Lord is here discerning the very heart of things.

The loss of first love is not a little thing. It is a matter of the most serious importance. He does not say that love was entirely gone from them, but there was a decline in its first freshness. Christ, when first presented to them, was loved devotedly. This we know from Paul's epistle to these same Ephesians, and from the Acts which give an account of his labors here. In Christ was found the fullest satisfaction for the soul. But when that love declined, the soul lost anchorage and began to drift. Love is the very foundation of Christian character. Love alone can give value to any service rendered in Christ's name. Therefore when love goes, works that have value in His eyes, of necessity, go with it. So here the Lord says: "Remember therefore from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do the first works." Nothing could more dishonor Christ than the loss of love for Him.

The testimony of the Christian is that he loves *Christ,* and loves Him beyond everything else in the world. If love decline, it is evidence of some other attraction come in to the dishonor of Christ. Christ must have the whole heart or none of it. There is no such thing as "half-hearted service," excepting that such service must ever be to His dishonor.

We can profess to the world, that in *Christ* we have found our "All in all," and yet, we can live in a manner to prove, after all, that we have *not* found Christ full satisfaction for the heart.

This condition did exist in Ephesus. The first love for

Christ was gone, and necessarily with it the first works, and to these by the word of Christ they are called back.

No question of doctrine is raised; it is simply a question of the heart. Even so, men will not credit with much value the doctrine, however pure, that has no *heart* in it. The loss of love implies distance, for we no longer think of the object we have ceased to love. Love annihilates distance, and no matter how far away the object may be the heart is ever with it. When love begins to wane, and other things come in, there is what the Scotch preacher terms "the expulsive power of a new affection," and the heart that goes astray from Christ will easily justify doctrine that is not true to Him. The heart governs the mind more than we think.

In Ephesus, though there had been this departure from first love, there could be said, in addition to what has already been spoken of in the way of approval, "This thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." Whoever the Nicolaitans were, nothing is said here of any doctrine of theirs. The doctrine comes in later, but in another connection, and for reprobation. But here these Nicolaitans are found at work, and along lines that would result later on in the formulation of doctrine. Whether the word refers to a sect, as commentators assure us, or not, is a matter of no importance. Whoever they were, and whatever they represented, it is their *deeds,* and not their persons which are here reprobated by the Lord. History knows nothing of any sect of this name; in fact, the *name alone* is all we have to work upon. It means, literally, "conquering the people"; and the second part of the compound is the word *laity* so well known to us.

In Corinth there grew up different schools, each professing a different leadership; some claiming Paul; some Cephas; some Apollos; and some Christ. Christians were making themselves disciples of men rather than of Christ. There has been a natural tendency to this in all Christian times—men setting up certain standards, and others gathering around

them. So Christ's own people have been dominated by clerical leaderships of various kinds. Thus the laity has been subjected to ecclesiastical control, and sect upon sect has multiplied and divided on the face of the earth. The eyes of the followers of Christ have been diverted from Him, and fixed upon men, and this would seem to be the very core of Nicolaitanism—the people subjected to the one who leads them. Whatever diverts from Christ is to His dishonor. The loss of "first love" means the loss of Him from consciousness, and this opens the way for the substitution of other leaders.

But Ephesus had not gone as far as this yet; they hated the deeds of such men, as did also Christ. He, for the blessing of His own, would have their eyes fixed upon Him alone, and in Him alone find full satisfaction for the soul.

How far we have drifted from primitive Christianity is demonstrated by the existence of the many sects of Christendom instead of the one Church of Christ. We have the church of a thousand creeds and in them human names substituted for the name of Christ. This is what the church in Ephesus hated, and yet what, in our times, we have come to tolerate so easily. It is just here, where such a diversity is manifest, that the voice of warning is heard: "He that hath an ear, let him hear." Would that we might heed that warning, and search our hearts as to whether there has been any conscious loss of "first love" for Christ. Whatever works there may be, none of them, however much the energy displayed in them, can compensate for a loss like this. But it is possible to be an overcomer here, as in each of the churches addressed, and the promise to such an one is: "To him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."

How we are carried back by these words to the very beginning of things, and yet, not merely to the beginning; for we have not here the garden of Eden, Adam's paradise, nor his "tree of life" which was for continuance of life upon the earth; but we have "the tree of life" which

speaks of life, not such as was transmitted to us by Adam, but of life which is secured to us by Christ, to be enjoyed eternally in the "paradise of God." A very different thing.

At the end of the book, paradise again comes into view, and the tree is there "yielding its fruit each month." The terms of the promise to the overcomer in Ephesus imply the possibility of partaking of that fruit now, thus securing to ourselves, for all present purposes, the manifestation of that life which is to abide when all else fails, and to come to full manifestation in the "paradise of God."

It would almost seem as if we had gone too far to get back to the place of first love, but nevertheless there is given to us the voice of recall, and this voice is, as it has ever been, to the *individual.*

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

IV

RELAPSE INTO JUDAISM

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write:—These things saith the first and the last, who became dead, and liveth. I know thy tribulation and thy poverty, (but thou art rich); and the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Fear not what thou art about to suffer. Behold the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall in no wise be hurt of the second death.—(Chapter 2:8-11.)

THERE is progression of evil in these letters as will be made plain as we proceed. This is apparent at least in the first four. The "loss of first love," manifest in Ephesus, opens the way for what we find here in Smyrna, and this, in turn, prepares the way for Pergamos. This progressive development of evil is also found in the first four parables of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. The parables and the apocalyptic letters, in fact, speak of the same thing.

Among historical interpreters there is a very general agreement, that in the letter to Smyrna we have a picture of the martyr age of the Church. Polycarp, one of the most conspicuous martyrs of the time, was himself bishop of the church in Smyrna. The words "Ye shall have tribulation ten days" have been generally referred to the persecutions under the Roman emperors.

It has been recently established by the historical study of the early Roman ages that there were just "ten persecutions," and what is here written may well suit the time, something more than two centuries, which lasted from Domi-

tian to Constantine. At any rate this is the time when the whole power of the Roman world was arrayed against the Christian Church.

To these suffering saints Jesus proclaims Himself "the first and last." He is One with whom there is no change, and, suitable to what we find here, He also proclaims Himself as One, "who became dead, and liveth."

For *His name's* sake these suffering Christians endured death, and He assures them that He also had been in death to prepare the way before them.

Power simply, as thus exercised by Satan against these helpless believers, could by no means be permitted to overthrow the Church. God would not allow Satan liberty to this extent. He overruled such suffering then, as He has done ever since; and so it has become proverbial, that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." Like the Israelites in Egypt, "the more they were persecuted, the more they grew."

Such open assaults of Satan were not frequent, nor of long duration, for it soon became manifest that God would not suffer them to prevail against His Church.

The word "Smyrna" means myrrh, which was one of the spices used to embalm the dead. Myrrh was also used in the incense burned on the golden altar. Such a martyr death, endured for Christ's sake, might justify the meaning of the word, and bear witness to the truth of how "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Ps. 116:15).

Over this death, borne for His sake, they would be triumphant, and after it receive from His hand "the crown of life."

In contrast with this open assault, our attention is called to a far more insidious evil, which arose from within rather than from without. This evil is referred to in the words: "The blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." We should give the most earnest consideration to the evil suggested by these words.

Christ calls it "blasphemy," and it originates with those who claim to be *Jews,* but whom the Lord denies to be such, and characterizes as "a synagogue of Satan."

That the Jews were the first and most violent opposers of the Church is evident to anyone that is familiar with the New Testament. But to say that this expression refers to the Jews as Jews is absolutely without warrant. The people here are characterized as guilty of "blasphemy" in claiming to be *Jews,* when in reality they were *not.* Such terms could hardly apply to the Jewish nation in general. It would be self-contradictory.

In speaking of this deadly opposition to the gospel Jesus is referring, manifestly, to something other than any open attack of the Jews upon the Church. The evil is altogether of another character.

In Matthew thirteenth we read: "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (MATT. 13:24-30).

This parable pictures for us the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven, we must remember, is not the *Church,* but rather what *professes* to be *Christian* in the world. Good seed was sown originally, but "while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat." This speaks of the

secret introduction of an evil which is the work of an enemy. This is *precisely* what we have in this letter to Smyrna. It was the manifestation of evil that followed the decline of first love. It is quite easy to see, also, how it could be developed.

The earliest disciples of Jesus, excepting the twelve chosen apostles, were *Jews.* There is a distinction between the Jews and Israel, and this distinction was the effect of the disruption of the kingdom after the death of Solomon. Thereafter the northern kingdom was spoken of as Israel. The southern kingdom was known as Judah, whence the *Jews.* Judas, the traitor, seems to have been the only one of the twelve belonging to *Judah.* The others appear to have belonged to the scattered remnant of *Israel.* The necessity of keeping this distinction in mind will be considered later. The final rejection of Christ by the Jews occurred when Stephen's testimony was refused. He was the *messenger,* sent after the nobleman, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (LUKE 19:14). Immediately after, Paul comes upon the scene, and becomes the apostle to the *Gentiles.*

The Jews were found everywhere throughout the Roman empire. In almost every locality they had a synagogue, and there generally the gospel was preached and to the Jew *first.*

The Jews, we must remember, had a splendid temple in Jerusalem, where, in connection with their services, they had a supreme pontiff, with an attending priesthood. Their mode of worship was spectacular and ritualistic. Sacrifices were offered, and the religious rites and ceremonies connected with them were of the most imposing character. They believed themselves, and rightly so, to be "the chosen people" of God, who had given instructions for the building of the temple, and for the observance of the ceremonial laws. The *Jew* had every reason to believe that when Messiah came the throne of David would be exalted over the surrounding nations, and Israel become the center of blessing to the whole earth. After the crucifixion, the temple services still continued, and we

find Peter and John going up to the temple as usual at the hour of prayer. Christianity appeared, naturally enough, to be the outgrowth of Judaism. Christ came and died, in the fulfillment of prophecy, and the Old Testament was apparently still in force with all its legal obligations. Even Peter is slow to see that the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile had been broken down, and that Gentiles were to be received on the same footing as the Jews.

Paul, who was chosen to be the apostle to the Gentiles, and who had a special commission to this effect, labored first of all for the conversion of the Jews. But he had scarcely begun his labors in Antioch before there arose a question of the most serious importance to the Christian Church. That question was so serious in fact, that it threatened the very existence of the Church except it were answered right.

The Jewish converts insisted upon being loyal to the temple ritual, and it was not long before they began to assert that circumcision and the keeping of the law of Moses were essential conditions of salvation. This demand was made also of Gentile believers. In fact, the generality of the Jewish converts would not recognize *anyone* as a believer that did not conform to this rule.

The question was first raised in Antioch, in connection with Paul's labors there. It arose within the Church itself, but was introduced from *without.* It was, in reality, the sowing of tares among the wheat. Paul was quick enough to discern the nature of this evil and the extent to which it might grow. The whole question was referred to the so-called "first council" of Jerusalem, in order that the original apostles might consider it, and dispose of it. At this conference the apostles rendered a decision which was intended to be final, but this did not, by any means, check the growth of the evil.

Judaistic Christians multiplied in the Church, and were the most violent opposers of Paul wherever he preached the gospel of Christ. They followed him everywhere. Even in Galatia, where the church was almost entirely composed of

Gentiles, the evil had grown to such proportion, that Paul gives an entire epistle to its rebuttal.

Division and strife were manifest everywhere. Judaizers of Christian faith and doctrine were confronting, and being confronted by, those who insisted on the truth as it is in Jesus. The latter maintained that the observance of Levitical ordinances, whether in respect to Gentile or Jew, had nothing whatever to do with a sinner's justification before God. This truth was maintained by Paul himself and against all gainsayers. He wrote to the Galatians, that they that had been justified apart from the law could not return and put themselves again under the law, without dishonor to Christ who had redeemed them from it. They had begun "in the Spirit," and were trying to perfect *His* work by going back "in the flesh" to carnal ordinances. This struggle with Judaism had to be maintained wherever a church was founded. It was a secret attack of Satan upon the truth of salvation by grace alone.

Paul has proved to us conclusively, that the law cannot justify; that it was never intended for the justification of the sinner. The only thing it could do was to bring "all men under condemnation"; in fact, to stop every mouth, and bring in the whole world guilty before God; and that is precisely what the law was *designed* to do. The law demanded obedience; practical, perfect, perpetual; and the curse was pronounced on everyone that failed to continue in every requirement of it. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (GAL. 3:10). Moreover, the failure in one point involved, as James has told us, the transgression of the whole. By the deeds of the law it was absolutely impossible for any man to be saved, and this Paul declared. Christ was "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (ROM. 10:4). He alone could save. The making of any legal requirement necessary for salvation was supplementary to the work of the cross and

dishonoring to it. But this was exactly what Judaism proclaimed. Those who proclaimed it were *Jews* who had received Christ, and who yet insisted on the necessity of keeping the law of Moses also in order to be saved.

The Church became Judaistic in character. God, by the teaching of the leaders, was once more hidden behind the veil, and there was no longer access to Him except through the mediation of a priestly class, and thus the people, who had been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, were robbed of their right to the place in which divine grace had established them. "Law" and "grace" are fundamental but contradictory principles. To introduce any condition whatever save faith alone for salvation is to repudiate grace and to do dishonor to the cross of Christ. The work of Christ is absolutely perfect and needs no supplementary help from angels or men.

Whoever imposes any obligation other than faith in Christ as the condition of salvation teaches a doctrine which had its origin in what Christ here calls "a synagogue of Satan."

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

V

AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write:—These things saith he that hath the sharp, two-edged sword. I know where thou dwellest, where Satan's throne is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in the days in which Antipas was my faithful witness, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a snare before the sons of Israel, to eat idol sacrifices and commit fornication. So also hast thou those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans in like manner. Repent, therefore; but if not, I am coming to thee quickly, and will make war with them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, will I give of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it."—(Chapter 2: 12-17.)

THE martyr age of the Church, which was represented to us in the letter to Smyrna, was followed by a time of great external prosperity. This change was brought about by the so-called conversion to Christianity of Constantine the Roman emperor. The genuineness of his conversion has been seriously doubted. Gibbon says: "The sublime theory of the gospel made a much fainter impression on his heart than on his understanding. As he gradually advanced in the knowledge of truth, he proportionately declined in the practice of virtue; and the same year of his reign in which he convened the council of Nice, was polluted by the execution, or rather murder, of his eldest son."

Again he says: "The gratitude of the Church has exalted the virtues and excused the failings of a generous patron, who seated Christianity on the throne of the Roman world;

and the Greeks who celebrate the festival of the Imperial saint seldom mention the name of Constantine without adding the title of '*equal to the Apostles.*'"

The benefits conferred upon the Church by Constantine were altogether of an external character. His edict of toleration removed many of the obstacles which seemed to prevent the progress of the gospel. He rewarded the cities in which heathen temples were destroyed, and became the popular idol of the Church. His attitude toward the Church had its influence upon all ranks in society. Rich and poor, in vast crowds, sought for admission.

The Roman historian says: "The salvation of the common people was purchased at an easy rate, if it be true that in one year twelve thousand men were baptized at Rome, beside a proportionable number of women and children, and that a white garment with twenty pieces of gold had been promised by the emperor to every convert."

The effect of all this upon the Church can be easily understood. Another has said: "Whatever may have been the true character of Constantine's conversion to the Christian faith, its consequences were of vast importance both to the empire and to the Church of Christ. It opened the way for the unobstructed propagation of the Gospel to a wider extent than at any former period of its history. All impediments to an open profession of Christianity were removed, and it became the established religion of the empire. Numerous, however, in various points of view, as were the advantages accruing to it from this change, it soon began to suffer from being brought into close contact with the fostering influence of secular power. The simplicity of the Gospel was corrupted; pompous rites and ceremonies were introduced; worldly honors and emoluments were conferred on the teachers of Christianity, and the kingdom of Christ in a great measure converted into a kingdom of this world." *

* See "Constantine the Great," in M'Clintock and Strong's *Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Cyclopædia.*

The Church, in an unholy alliance with the world, is what is set before us in this letter to Pergamos. There is a close resemblance here to the truth found in the third parable of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. "Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which indeed is less than all seeds, but, when it is grown, it is greater than herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and lodge in its branches" (MATT. 13: 31-32. Gr.).

"The tree," says Edersheim, "whose wide spreading branches afforded lodgment to the birds of heaven, was a familiar Old Testament figure for a mighty kingdom that gave shelter to the nations."

The reference is to the prophecy of Ezekiel where we have represented to us, under this figure, the Assyrian power.

In the fourth chapter of Daniel we have a similar figure which is interpreted by the prophet as follows: "The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth: whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong; for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth" (DAN. 4: 20-22).

The similarity of the tree here mentioned, as the representation of an earthly kingdom, to the tree spoken of in the parable can scarcely be doubted. Christianity in its beginning was comparatively insignificant; like "a grain of mustard seed," which was proverbial among the Jews as "the least of all seeds," but, in the parable, it is seen to outstrip itself and become a *tree*, in the shelter of whose branches the birds of heaven find lodgment.

In the first parable: "Some seed fell by the wayside, and the

fowls of the air came and devoured them." The word translated "fowls of the air" is the same Greek word that is used to indicate the "birds" which lodge in the branches of the tree. These birds are interpreted by our Lord by the words: "Then cometh the wicked one." There is every reason to think that the birds of the first parable are identical with the birds of the third. Such a thought is in perfect harmony with the picture we have under consideration.

The primitive Church was insignificant and contemptible in the eyes of the world, and persecution was its first inheritance; but when Constantine was converted, Christianity became respectable, and the profession of Christ easy and honorable. It became the fashion "to unite with the Church," and thousands flocked into it. "The fowls of the air" found shelter in the branches of the tree, and an alliance was made with the world from the effects of which the Church never recovered.

The church in Pergamos is accused of dwelling "where Satan's throne is." To speak of the Church dwelling "where Satan's *throne* is" was more than the translators of the Greek text felt equal to, and so the word for "throne" was softened down to "seat."

Archbishop Trench says: "This is a riddle which can not be solved." If his wisdom is spent, it might appear venturesome to make any further attempt at solution.

Satan *has* a throne, however much of a riddle this may be to the biblical commentator. On that throne he reigns; but his sphere of authority is not in hell, though this be the popular opinion. Hell is the place where the wicked are to be confined, and it has not as yet been opened. Satan has never been there, nor has anyone else. When Satan is consigned to hell, he shall not tear the bars away and roam freely over the earth as he does now. The door of God's prison shall not be wrenched open by the rebellious sinners confined in it, nor shall Satan be sovereign in that place of banishment from God. He will be the most wretched sufferer there and

no escape will be possible from the judgment which overtakes him. Satan *has* a throne, not hereafter in hell, but now; and the church in Pergamos dwelt where that throne was.

Whatever may be the popular opinion, we are assured by the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians, that Satan is "the god of this world" (2 COR. 4:4).

Men may think loosely about this, and speak carelessly, but Scripture is plain enough and appeals to us in its own earnest way. Nothing is gained by underestimating the strength of the enemy, nor do we escape danger by shutting our eyes to it. The personality and power of Satan, though denied by men, are affirmed in the Bible.

In the record of our Lord's temptation, as in Scripture elsewhere, these are assumed, and his immense claims are not denied, nor even questioned. "The devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. And he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (MATT. 4:8-9. Gr.). He presents himself as "the prince of this world," claiming sovereignty over it. Such sovereignty was, as we know, originally conferred on man but was wrested from him by Satan. In Luke's account of the temptation, Satan says: "I will give thee all this authority and the glory of them: for it is delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will I give it" (LUKE 4:6. Gr.).

Later on, in Revelation, Satan is represented by a "great red dragon" having "seven heads" and wearing "ten horns" of the world-empire, and to the "beast" of the thirteenth chapter he gives "his power, and his *seat,* and great authority." There his *throne* is recognized; for it is throne, not seat, the same as in the letter to Pergamos. From this throne he reigns as "the prince of this world," or, more literally, "the god of this age." It is the "age" of Christ's rejection, and, in its spirit, will remain unchanged until Christ comes again.

The kingdoms of this world are not Christian no matter how much they may claim to be. Even where Christ is owned

and preached, the spirit of the world is true to its own character. This nation in reality is not a Christian one, though it may be called such in contrast with heathen kingdoms.

It is quite true, as Paul tells us: "The powers that be are ordained of God" (ROM. 13:1). Because of the necessary restraint upon the outbreak of the evil that is in man, even the most corrupt rulers in the world have to pay a tribute to righteousness. Human governments, even in the highest form of development, are by no means perfect; and the kingdoms of this world are not what they shall be when under the administration of Christ Himself. The true King of the earth has been cast out, and the kingdoms of the world, administered by man during His absence, are, though under restraint of God, dominated by Satan, who has never yet relinquished his sovereignty over them.

It was a masterpiece of satanic wisdom to induce Constantine to profess conversion and become a patron of the Christian Church, and the Church, by this alliance with the world, lost altogether her God-given character.

The word translated "Church" is, literally, *ecclesia,* and means "a calling out." It is made up of those who by divine grace have been "called out" of the world which, according to Scripture, still "lieth in the wicked one."

In his epistle to the Colossians Paul says: "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God" (COL. 3:1. Gr.). To be thus raised up with Christ means to be outside of the world, and apart from the spirit of it altogether. Any true life lived for Him here is a life, as Scripture affirms, "hid with Christ in God" (COL. 3:3).

To be commended and honored by the world, or even understood by it, would place us in a totally different sphere from that in which Christ moved when He was here upon the earth. Nothing short of absolute separation from the world in order to association with Christ can define the position in which we have been established by divine grace.

To be "called out" from the world means, if anything, separation from it. We are not to be dwellers *in* it, but pilgrims *through* it. The only world the natural man knows anything about is the material world in which he "lives, and moves, and has his being."

The wise man of old said: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (ECCLES. 7:29). Ever since the Fall, the inventive faculty of man has been devising things to make the world attractive and comfortable. He seems almost to have reached the limit of his ability in this direction, but, with all his accomplishments, he has absolutely failed in his effort. Christ said of his disciples: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

To lose sight of our heavenly citizenship, and to become mere dwellers upon the earth, instead of pilgrims through it, is to reproduce the condition found in the Pergamos church.

Such outspoken alliance with the world immediately opened wide the door to other evils. Christ commended them for holding fast His name, and not denying His faith, in the martyr days just passed, and, in testimony of this, the name of one conspicuous martyr is mentioned, unknown maybe to the Church historians, but who is not forgotten in the record made here.

All this is commendable and the Lord does not fail to own it, but He nevertheless brings against Pergamos a serious charge that would never have been possible but for this wholesale admission of the unregenerate into the Church. Christ says: "Thou hast there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a snare before the sons of Israel, to eat idol sacrifices and commit fornication. So also hast thou those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans in like manner."

The deeds of the Nicolaitans are spoken of in the letter to Ephesus, but now their doctrine is fully formulated. Church history has given us no satisfactory record of these people.

An account of their origin was given many years after the book of Revelation was written, but it seems to have been manufactured for the purpose of giving an explanation of what we find here. They are represented as followers of Nicolas, one of the seven original deacons, who is accused of being a degenerate. All kinds of conjectures have been made, as to the nature of the offenses committed by him and his followers, but no certainty about them is found anywhere. But the Word of God is not dependent upon Church history for interpretation. That there existed in the Church, during the period under consideration, a condition which accords exactly with the meaning of the name is an unquestioned truth.

There was the broadest kind of a distinction between the "clergy" and the "laity." The word Nicolaitan means, as we have before seen, "conquering the people." Immediately after the alliance of the Church with the world, the clergy come to the front, and assume all authority in the matters of doctrine and discipline.

In the time of Constantine the council of Nicæa was held, and it is singular and interesting to notice the identity between "Nicæa" and "Nicolaitan." Nicæa speaks of "victory" which, in Nicolaitanism, the *clergy* had obtained over the *laity*. As a matter of fact, in this council the clergy were manifestly supreme. The laity had no part in it whatever. The council was summoned in the year 325 by Constantine. The Roman empire had at that time some 1,800 bishops and 1,000 of these were in the Greek provinces and 800 in the Latin. According to one statement, 318 of these attended the council, and the whole number of delegates, including presbyters and others, was about 1,500.

The opening of the council is described by Eusebius as follows: "After all the bishops had entered the central building of the royal palace, on the sides of which very many seats were prepared, each took his place with becoming modesty, and silently awaited the arrival of the emperor. The court

officers entered one after another, though only such as professed faith in Christ. The moment the approach of the emperor was announced by a given signal, they all rose from their seats, and the emperor appeared like a heavenly messenger of God, covered with gold and gems, a glorious presence, very tall and slender, full of beauty, strength and majesty. With this external adornment he united the spiritual ornament of the fear of God, modesty, and humility, which could be seen in his downcast eyes, his blushing face, the motion of his body, and his walk. When he reached the golden throne prepared for him, he stopped, and sat not down till the bishops gave him the sign. And after him they all resumed their seats." In commenting upon this, Schaff says: "How great the contrast between this position of the church and the time of her persecution but scarcely passed! What a revolution of opinion in bishops who had once feared the Roman emperor as the worst enemy of the church, and who now greeted the same emperor in his half barbarous attire as an angel of God from heaven, and gave him, though not yet even baptized, the honorary presidency of the highest assembly of the church!" *

The council was convened for the purpose of settling two controversies; the one had reference to the nature of Christ, and the other was in respect to the time for the observance of Easter. The emperor himself opened the council with a prayer for harmony, but there was, in reality, as much harmony as in a modern political convention. The session was a stormy one throughout, but the well-known creed was the final result of the deliberations. Schaff says: "The council issued twenty canons in reference to discipline. The creed and the canons were written in a book, and again signed by the bishops. The council issued a letter to the Egyptian and Libyan bishops as to the decision of the three main points; the emperor also sent several edicts to the churches, in which he ascribed the decrees to divine inspiration, and set them forth

* *History of The Christian Church.* Vol. 3, page 624.

as laws of the realm. On the twenty-ninth of July, the twentieth anniversary of his accession, he gave the members of the council a splendid banquet in his palace, which Eusebius (quite too susceptible to worldly splendor) describes as a figure of the reign of Christ on earth; he remunerated the bishops lavishly, and dismissed them with a suitable valedictory, and with letters of commendation to the authorities of all the provinces on their homeward way."

Whatever value may be attached to this creed, it bears a sad witness to the fact that the plain language of the Word of God was not regarded as a sufficient rule for faith and practice. Since those days formulary after formulary has been introduced and each of them, to a greater or less degree, destructive of the unity of the Church. Thus the minds of men have been diverted from the Word of God, and human creeds have come in to take its place. That such a state of things should be brought about by Judaistic teaching such as we have considered can be easily understood.

God's original thought about the people of Israel was to make them a nation of priests. This became utterly impossible by reason of their adoption of the legal covenant. Under legal conditions no man could draw near to God; hence arose the necessity for an intermediate priesthood, and even the supreme head of this priesthood had no access to God except on one day in the year, the Day of Atonement.

Throughout the Old Testament dispensation the veil hangs before the "Holy of Holies." Into the presence of God, none, excepting the high priest, could go. It is significant, therefore, to notice the fact that, when Christ died, the veil of the temple was rent in twain "from the top to the bottom." This clearly indicated that the rending had been done from *above*. All men could now draw near to God because of Christ's accomplished work. The throne of God was revealed as a throne of grace, and all were encouraged to come "boldly" to it. To re-introduce Judaism was to restore conditions abolished by the cross of Christ.

The Christian Church, in the whole extent of its membership, was to be a "holy priesthood," and each member was to have the same blessed standing before God. The Word of God was to be the all-sufficient guide for faith and practice.

But when the mustard seed became a tree and "the birds of the air" came to lodge in the branches, discordant voices arose within the walls of the Church, and hence the necessity for ecumenical councils to settle authoritatively the meaning of the Word of God, and regulate matters of doctrine or discipline.

In a church thoroughly mixed up with the world there is no consciousness of the presence of God; the assurance of salvation becomes lost, and people cannot declare positively their belief in justification, but only say, "they hope they are saved."

It can be easily seen how such a condition of things would soon result in a distinct separation between those who had special gifts for the edification of the Church, and those who were less fully endowed, or who, perhaps, thought they had no gifts whatever.

The distinction between clergy and laity, as now obtains, marks the end of a long departure from God. Such a distinction cannot be maintained from anything found in the Word of God. It is perfectly right and fitting, and in accordance with Scripture, that there should be pastors, evangelists, and teachers; but, that these have any greater privileges, or any nearer access to God than any other child of His, is a theory not warranted by Scripture. Those who hold it are justly chargeable with "the doctrine of the Nicolaitans."

There is now no intermediate priesthood of any kind whatsoever. Every child of God has by right of redemption a full and free access into the grace wherein we all stand. To insist upon the preëminence of the clergy is to bring about the utter subjection of the laity and this, in its last and worst form, is seen in that system which claims Peter for its first pope, and where final authority is found in the church alone.

Here the word authority means, of necessity, what the councils have determined it to be, and the decrees of the councils have always been the decrees of the clergy. If this is not what "Nicolaitanism" *means*, we shall search Church history in vain to find a meaning for it.

That such a disastrous condition existed in the time of Constantine is sufficiently evident, and wherever the opinion prevails to-day, it brings the same disaster and loss to those who so easily surrender the place of nearness to God, which divine grace has given them.

Together with the development of this doctrine in Pergamos we have also: "Those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a snare before the sons of Israel." Here we are not so dependent upon the mere meaning of the name, although it has the same sinister significance. Balaam means "the destroyer of the people." What he *was* and the doctrine he held are brought clearly enough before us in the book of Numbers where we get his history. That Balaam possessed a true knowledge of God is evident from his prophetic utterances. He appears upon the scene when the Israelites had finished their journey through the wilderness and were encamped on the borders of Moab. The king of Moab, Balak the son of Zippor, knowing of the victories already achieved by them, sends for Balaam in order that he may curse Israel. Balaam consults Jehovah, and is told plainly not to go with Balak's messengers. The second time an embassy comes to him from Balak with promises of a great reward, and God permits Balaam to have his own way and go. Arriving on the scene, he is restrained in his utterances, and, though hired to curse, can only bless Israel. He knows well enough that his curse will be ineffectual against the people whom God has blessed.

The Moabites were not Israelites, though there was blood relationship between them. Balak's connection with Israel was nominal rather than real. So in the Church at large there are those who make a nominal profession, and yet

have no real relationship to the truth for which the Church stands.

Balak is "the son of Zippor," "Zippor" meaning "a little bird," which cannot fail to remind us of "the birds of the air," that found shelter in the branches of the tree.

Israel, settling down on the borders of Moab, troubles the uneasy conscience of Balak. Whatever nominal relation he may have to Israel, there is a great gulf fixed between them, and in his heart he hates Israel. An unregenerate man may have a nominal connection with the Church, but he is just as much unregenerate in it as he was out of it. In every respect he is even worse than he was before. He is but serving Satan in the livery of heaven. His hypocrisy is covered by a cloak of righteousness.

"Settling down on the borders of Moab" may correspond precisely with "dwelling where Satan's throne is." This "settling down on the borders of Moab" is what, one might say, makes Balaam possible.

As a matter of fact, the whole story of Balaam could be cut out of the book of Numbers without interfering with the narrative, had Israel *gone on* instead of settling down. Balaam and his doctrines would never have come in if the Church had kept her original God-given place of separation. Balaam himself was right enough if there had been no Balak to seduce him. He was a man of genius; had a commanding intellect; knew the God of Israel, and the true course of prophetic history. When he got his first call from Balak, he declined it on the ground that God whom he had consulted refused to let him go. When the second call came, with the promise of greater honorarium, Balaam says: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more" (NUM. 22:18). This sounds very well but, as Robertson of Brighton says: "Brave men do not vaunt their courage, nor honorable men their honesty, nor do the truly noble boast of high birth. All who understand the human heart perceive

a secret sense of weakness in these loud boasts of immaculate purity."

With the splendid protest on his lips, he nevertheless accepts the call of Balak, and, as we are told elsewhere, because he "loved the wages of unrighteousness." Undoubtedly he meant to be true, and to say only what Jehovah gave him to say, and his words which we read in the book of Numbers seem altogether orthodox and in accord with the truth. Let all this be granted, yet it says here, he "taught Balak to cast a snare before the sons of Israel." In doing this his true character as a hireling prophet comes out. He is taking Balak's money, and must therefore do what will please Balak. His sublime declaration about Israel—"From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations"—was an absolute truth. This separation of the Israelites from all other nations was an unqualified necessity if God were to make Himself known among them. In this place of separation they had the pledge of God's blessing no matter who might curse them. To give up this place of separation and mingle with the idolatrous nations around them was the only thing that could effect the forfeiture of their blessing, and bring upon them the retributive justice of God. Balaam taught Balak how to allure them from this place of separation, and this brought upon them the curse which Balak in his heart desired.

When the Roman empire became nominally Christian, the line of separation between the Church and the world became almost entirely effaced. Between the true believer within, and the utterly Godless without, stood the nominal professor, as Balak stood between Israel and Midian. Such a condition made possible the hireling prophet, who did not hesitate to furnish the food "the mixed multitude" craved. With Constantine began the alliance of the Church and the world which has never been broken. There has been a persistent departure from God ever since. The Church and the world are on good

terms to-day, and, though individuals may be recovered, the great mass of professors are on the down grade, and the Church and the world, with every distinctive mark of separation obliterated, keep holiday together.

It is a remarkable fact that Philistia, but an insignificant border land, as if claiming jurisdiction over all, has bestowed its name upon Palestine, even as Rome, with the same universal claim, has annexed in her illegitimate title the one great word *Catholic*. Legislation cannot bring into existence a body of Christians. An act of congress may give the name Christian to a nation, but it cannot produce the birth from above. The illusions of such self-deception eternity will dispel. Where the Church and the world are mixed together so thoroughly as they are now: where people join the church in order to be saved, as they do so commonly, and therein testify to the loss from consciousness of the necessity of the new birth; it is not strange to find a practical life in accordance with such a profession. The Church is venerated as an eternal life-saving institution. Losing her divine character, she can no longer rely upon divine resources to keep her in existence, and so the curse of Israel blights her, and men look "unto the hills for help" instead of unto the Lord. There is a never-ceasing plea for money, followed by the apotheosis of liberal givers; money is the indispensable need and the source of its acquirement is not considered; money is money, wherever it is coined, and the dollar of the ungodly possesses the same purchasing power as the dollar of the saint. Balak, with his house full of silver and gold, is solicited on every hand, and God is treated as though He were not. Money will accomplish all purposes. It will build churches, maintain the minister, furnish luxurious equipment, send missionaries to the home and foreign fields; it will buy Bibles, circulate literature, found schools and colleges, maintain hospitals and other philanthropic enterprises; it ministers to the sick, relieves poverty, and does everything conceivable except the one absolutely essential thing, the conversion of a soul to

God. This money cannot do, and you cannot purchase with it the power of the Holy Spirit, any more than could Simon the sorcerer. "Thy money perish with thee," said Peter to him, and this would be a just malediction on all that have lost their faith in God, and think Him too far away to accomplish anything for them. No wonder the infidel sneers at the God whose incompetence we proclaim in the methods we adopt to save His cause from ruin. When Jacob leaves Laban, and gets back to Bethel, there will be power with him, and not before. There is but *one* source of power, and though that is theoretically owned, it is nevertheless practically ignored. We pray, and without waiting for an answer, set in motion machinery energized by human power, and we accomplish nothing except to expose the impotency of Him in whom we claim to trust. Impotency—because He will not set the seal of His approval upon the methods we employ. The "dry bones" respond to the prophesying of Ezekiel, and there is a "noise, and behold a shaking," and the bones come together, bone to bone. (EZEK. 37:7). The organization is perfect, but there is "no breath in them." The "Spirit of God," of whose power we are so dismally destitute, must enter these organized "bones," before the "exceeding great army" shall stand up and march on to the conflict. We do not need *money,* but we do need, and sorely need, the Spirit of the living God.

That such a state of things exists to-day, no one could, by any possibility, deny. Such a condition is everywhere prevalent in the Church, and had its origin in her first failure to maintain a distinct place of separation from the world. But there is a chance for the overcomer, and a blessed promise to him: "To him," says Christ, "will I give of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it." The manna speaks of that bread which came down from heaven, and sustained the Israelites during their long journey through the wilderness. The hidden manna was that which was car-

ried into the land, and kept in the holy place; a precious memorial of what had sustained them while they were on their pilgrim way.

The manna was a type of Christ. He was the true bread which came down from heaven to be the food of God's people while on their journey as pilgrims through the world. But Christ is now gone out of the world, and is altogether hidden from it. To go out into the place of separation with Him is not to lose, but to gain immeasurably. It is, in fact, to eat of the "hidden manna," which is alone competent to sustain us on the rough road of an earthly pilgrimage.

"The white stone" is something beside; it was cast in the voter's urn bearing with it the approval of him who cast it. So here we are given the promise of approval from Christ, which is more than compensation for any loss sustained by giving up the world.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

VI

LEAVENING THE MEAL-OFFERING

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:—These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto fine brass. I know thy works, and love, and faith, and service, and thine endurance, and thy last works to be more than the first. But I have against thee that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teacheth and leadeth astray my servants to commit fornication and to eat of idol sacrifices. And I gave her time that she might repent, and she will not repent of her fornication. Behold, I cast her into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they shall repent of her works; and I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth reins and hearts; and I will give to you each one according to your works. But unto you I say, the rest who are in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, such as have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I do not cast upon you any other burden; only what ye have hold fast till I shall come. And he that overcometh, and that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with an iron rod, as the vessels of a potter are broken in pieces, as I also have received from my Father; and I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. —(Chapter 2: 18-29.)

IN this letter is shown the culmination of evil already manifest in the Church. The coming of the Lord is announced for the first time, and the announcement is an indication that we have reached a condition that will continue on until He comes. The evil found in full development here is a logical issue of the failure on the part of the Church to maintain a place of distinct separation from the world around. The record of Church historians bears witness to the truth of this. We have already seen the historical development of the Church represented by the parables

of the kingdom in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. The fourth parable teaches the same truth as this fourth letter, and the interpretation of the one furnishes corresponding meaning for the other.

"Another parable spake he unto them, The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (MATT. 13:33).

Among Bible students there is substantial agreement as to the meaning of certain features presented in this parable. The theory commonly entertained is thus given by Lange: "The woman is an apt figure of the Church. Leaven, a substance kindred, yet quite opposed to meal—having the power of transforming and preserving it, and converting it into bread, thus representing the divine in its relation to, and influence upon, our natural life. One of the main points of the parable is the 'hiding,' or the mixing of the leaven in the three measures of meal. This refers to the great visible Church, in which the living gospel seems, as it were, hidden and lost. It appears as if the gospel were engulfed in the world; but under the regenerating power of Christianity it will at last be seen that the whole world shall be included in the Church."

This interpretation, however generally accepted, is open to a very serious objection. Let us remember that this parable, as the others are, is given to represent what "the kingdom of heaven" is *like*. The kingdom of heaven is, clearly enough, Christ's kingdom here upon earth. But the King is away, and the administration of the kingdom is in the hands of men. We have already seen, in the preceding parables, what character the kingdom, as thus administered, assumes. First, there were four casts of seed, and only one of these partially successful; then came the field mingled with wheat and tares; after that, in the parable of the mustard seed, we are shown the rapid external growth of the Church by the reception of the unregenerate into it. In still further develop-

ment, we have now before us a woman hiding leaven in three measures of meal, "till the whole was leavened."

An inerrable interpretation of this must be in harmony with what has gone before. Had we no *preconceived* opinions, there would be no difficulty. Unfortunately we inherit a great many "traditions of the Fathers," and find it difficult to get away from them, and allow Scripture to speak for itself.

Trench calls those who differ from him, "A little band of separatists." The archbishop cannot, however, dismiss in such summary fashion those who venture to disagree with him. If the woman here represents the Church, and the leaven the "gospel" which, as Lange says, is "engulfed in the world," and for the purpose of regenerating the world, then there is a flat contradiction to what is found in the second parable. There the wheat and tares are to "grow together till the harvest," when the reapers are sent forth to bind the tares in bundles for burning, and gather the wheat into the barn. To insist that leaven means "the diffusive power of Christianity," introduced into the world for the purpose of its transformation, would mean the eradication of the tares before the harvest at the end of the age. That the world is *ever* to be transformed by the Church, or even nominally converted to Christianity, is the mere dream of man, and has no foundation in Scripture anywhere. The dark night that has fallen upon the world can be ended only by the rising of the "Sun of righteousness." Scripture plainly declares: "Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee" (Is. 60:2).

If the word leaven, in the parable under consideration, means something *good,* it is altogether exceptional in this passage. The uniform significance elsewhere is evil. Jesus, speaking of "the *doctrine* of the Pharisees and Sadducees," calls it "leaven." He also speaks of "the leaven of Herod." After the same manner, the apostle speaks of "the leaven of malice and wickedness," and of "the *un*leavened bread of

sincerity and truth." Again, in speaking of evil doctrine, he twice warns us of how "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

Why is there such a violent reaction against the meaning of the word in the parable before us? Is it done in the interest of the kingdom of heaven? Is it to guard that kingdom against the entrance of evil? Such, clearly enough, seems to be the purpose, but in this desire there is a manifest misapprehension of what is meant by "the kingdom of heaven." Let the kingdom of heaven be what it really is, Christ's kingdom administered by man during His absence, and there is no difficulty whatever in allowing leaven to have its uniform significance. Even the dictionary will not permit of leaven having a good significance. There it means "to vitiate, to corrupt, to make sour."

Leaven is yeast, and is introduced into bread for the purpose of making it light. In the meal-offering, which was a type of Christ, the introduction of leaven was strictly prohibited. The woman of the parable is thus seen doing what she was expressly forbidden to do. She is leavening the three measures of the meal-offering. That the woman represents the Church is the common agreement, but, to speak more accurately, she represents the *official class* in the Church, which became so prominent when the distinction between the Church and the world was lost.

The Israelites had not been long in the wilderness before "the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes" (NUM. 11:4-6). This history repeated itself in the history of the Church when the "mixed multitude" came in, and clamored for Balaam teachers. It was not strange to find such ecclesiastical go-betweens who were

willing to furnish "the light bread" for which the "mixed multitude" craved. Thus, for "the true bread from heaven" was substituted bread made from "leavened meal." This interpretation, if it be not accepted by the mass of commentators, is at least justified by the solemn facts of history. Man, wherever found in his natural condition, has been willing to traffic in holy things to his own advantage. The more worldly people are, the more willing they are to commit their spiritual interests to others. Such a condition prevailed in those early days. Men and women in the Church were worldly, and perfectly willing to leave their spiritual concerns in the hands of men set apart for the purpose, and it is no wonder that these men turned it to their own advantage. When Christian people become too much occupied with other things, and find no time for the study of the Word of God, they will intrust this sacred privilege to a priestly class which, in many a case, has stooped to lower the doctrine to suit the hearer.

Such is the condition represented by Thyatira, and, therefore, our Lord takes His supreme title: "The Son of God." This title, hitherto, He has not assumed. "His eyes, as a flame of fire," penetrate things through and through. "His feet, like unto fine brass," will yet tread "the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." As "the Son of God" He rebukes the church that would degrade Him and keep Him the son of a human mother, while exalting *her* above Him as "the mother of God" and "the queen of heaven." The system is denounced in the words: "I have against thee that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teacheth and leadeth astray my servants to commit fornication and to eat of idol sacrifices." Here, as in the parable, we have a *woman* charged with the introduction of the evil. As the word "Balaam" directed us to the history in the Old Testament for light on what was found in Pergamos, so here, the word "Jezebel" carries us back to the time of worst apostasy in Israel, when idolatry was introduced by this Zidonian queen, and the prophets of Jeho-

vah were slain. In this letter Jezebel represents none other than the woman of the parable, hiding "leaven" in the three measures of meal. It is her self-assertion that leads Christ to assert *His* claim as "the Son of God."

It is true indeed that the bishops of Rome, in the early days of the Church, claimed a commanding and ever-increasing influence, but what Roman Catholic historian can furnish any proof of these claims having been founded by divine right? It was not until temporal power was established, at the close of the eighth century, that the episcopal form was changed into the papal system. Hildebrand, who ascended the papal throne in 1083, under the name of Gregory VII., perfected the papal system, and developed the essential features of the Roman church. No one could object to any doctrine, held by this church or any other, that can be proved by the Word of God, but when, through her supreme pontiff, she claims infallibility, and introduces a doctrine of her own unwarranted by Scripture, it is our right and our privilege to protest against it.

Where does Rome get her authority to put ecclesiastical tradition on a par with the oracles of God? Where, in the Scripture, can she find authority for the veneration of the virgin Mary, the saints, their pictures and relics?

Baptismal regeneration by water as essential to salvation, and priestly absolution, are alike dishonoring to the accomplished work of Christ. What further degradation is offered to the work of Christ by Romish works of "supererogation," with corresponding extra merits, constituting a treasury at the disposal of the pope for the dispensation of indulgences which are transferable to souls in purgatory!

The pope, assisted in the government by his college of cardinals, with its cardinal bishops, cardinal priests, and cardinal deacons, constitutes the authority to which all alike must bow down in reverence. Such priestly domination was never established by authority of Scripture. It has been built up in the interests of a priestly class, to the dishonor of Christ and to the degradation of His people. All through these days

of appalling darkness there were those who refused all of these abominations and remained loyal to their convictions of truth concerning Christ and His word. To such faithful ones, then and now, He says, "Hold fast till I shall come." Excepting these few faithful ones, the "woman" came to absolute rule over the whole mass of Christendom. It is doubtful indeed if paganism itself can furnish another example like this of spiritual despotism, ignorance, superstition, and bondage.

In all these "dark ages" there were "overcomers," who, whatever the cost, refused to bend their necks to this yoke. The system itself survived the shock of the Reformation, and continues on until, in its last development, it is seen as "a scarlet woman," riding the "beast" of imperial power. It is the organization and instrumentality of Satan, and shall be destroyed when he has no further use for it. When the true Church shall have been removed to heaven, no further evil can be wrought by such a false system, and the imperial power, which it has so long coveted, shall be the instrument of its destruction.

The promise to the overcomer stands out in beautiful contrast with the usurpation of reign on the part of the false church.

"He that overcometh, and that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with an iron rod, as the vessels of a potter are broken in pieces, as I also have received from my Father; and I will give him the morning star."

"The Father judgeth no man," said Jesus to the Jews, "but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (JOHN. 5:22).

As the Son of God, there is vested in Him the right and title to absolute authority over the nations. Such is the declaration of the second Psalm. After "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel" in vain against the anointed of Jehovah, the decree goes forth: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall

give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. 2:7-9). This decree shall be enforced when Christ comes to execute judgment committed to Him. To those who in the midst of the monstrous evils of the false church remain true to Him there is given the promise of authority over the nations and a joint-heirship in the Messianic reign.

On one occasion, Peter said to Jesus: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (MATT. 19:27-28). This answer shows us how literally the saints of Christ shall reign with Him in the Millennial kingdom when He comes to establish it. Any claim of reign by the saints of Christ before His coming, such as we find in Corinth, is stamped as false. When Christ comes again, He comes to reign, and His enemies shall be subdued by an "iron rod." It is the time "when judgment returns to righteousness," and "the inhabitants of the earth learn righteousness," through the judgment executed upon it.

The "iron rod," in the hand of Him who is competent to hold it, can alone bring the blessing to the earth, for which it has so long waited. In the estimate of man, the time for this has been already long deferred. It might seem as though God were regardless, if not powerless to stem the tide flowing against Him. But God is not regardless; He is long suffering with evil; "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." There is, however, an ordained limit beyond which rebellion shall not go. God is able to end the rebellion and He will. Christ's kingdom shall be established, not as men vainly imagine by the preaching of the gospel, but by the iron rod that shall smite down all

opposition and make the enemies of Christ like the broken pieces of a potter's vessel. The second Psalm is no prophecy of the conversion of the world by the diffusive light of the gospel. Men may think so, but God has declared otherwise. "The darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" when "the Lord shall arise upon" Israel. The day will dawn, but not until after such a night as the world has not yet seen. The coming of that day will be heralded by "the morning star." This, therefore, is promised to the overcomer. "I will give him the morning star." To have this, is to be away with Him before the day dawns, and to come with Him when He comes to brighten the world with His glory. Fidelity to Him as the day darkens is the characteristic of the overcomer, and, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 TIM. 2:12). Faithfulness, in the midst of so much that is false, necessarily involves suffering. Such suffering is not merely owned but it is honored also, and they that endure it shall share with Christ in His Millennial reign over the earth.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

VII

THE REFORMATION

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write:—These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain which are about to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before my God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and keep it and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come [upon thee] as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come upon thee. But thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy. He that overcometh, he shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, and will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.—(Chapter 3: 1-6.)

A REVOLT from Rome was the foregone conclusion, except that all reality and earnestness had died out among men. The absence of Christ from the earth left the throne of His kingdom vacant, and He must of necessity, so it was argued, have some vicar to occupy His place until His return. At the first, the personality and presence of the Holy Spirit was realized, and allegiance to Him fully owned. The words of the decree, issued by the first council of the Church, were: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us."

The administration of the affairs of the Church was under the immediate control of the Holy Spirit. He chose men for specific work, and He directed their movements. Had He been maintained in His place as the governing Spirit of the body, there had been no schism of any kind. The Spirit of God is intolerant of evil and will not go on with men that

are given up to the corrupting influences of the world. The Church settled down into a condition which could not be sanctioned by the Holy Spirit unless, indeed, He were found putting the seal of His approval upon what was manifestly wrong. To reject the Holy Ghost as the governing Spirit of the body was to vacate entirely the throne of Christ's kingdom so far as any heavenly rule is considered. Christ, being absent, must have a vicar—such was the theory—someone to represent Him and rule in His stead. The fundamental feature of Romanism is the absolute supremacy of the pope as the vicar of Jesus Christ, and the head of the Church in all ecclesiastical affairs.

From the days of Gregory VII. the dream has been so to establish the Romish church that the pope might be the sole sovereign in temporal affairs as well as in spiritual. The gigantic efforts made to establish and enforce this pretension constitute a large part of the history of the middle ages. The revolt of the French, and the removal of the papal residence, made the first great breach in this arrogant claim. The gulf was still further widened during the time when different popes sat on rival thrones and hurled anathemas at one another. This condition caused a large number of people to lose what respect they had for papal authority, and produced the conviction of corruption existing in the Church, extending from the papal head throughout all the members. Attempts at reformation were made, and Church councils were held for the purpose of correcting the abuses found in the practical life of the Church, and changing the constitution so as to subject the pope to the decrees of the Church councils. Had these efforts succeeded, it might have stifled the cries for reform which were growing louder and louder. They did not succeed, and the Church sank back to the depths of infamy through the open and broadcast sale of indulgences for sin.

When the voice of Martin Luther thundered through the German empire, it found an echo in many a heart that was

utterly weary of the whole system. The protest of these reformers against the abuses in the Church were articulated in the Augsburg Confession. Over against these articles of protest were written the decrees of the Council of Trent. The Reformation, of which many had dreamed, and for which many had longed, had at last come, and was manifestly the mighty work of God. The Protestants, bound together by the courage of their convictions, stood firmly against the evils which they had so long endured. If anybody, however, hoped for a united Protestantism against Roman despotism he was doomed to an early disappointment. Zwingli and the Swiss reformers differed from Luther and his followers in regard to the Lord's supper. Calvin, later on, was not able to reconcile these systems to each other, nor to his own. The sacramentarian controversy was the destruction of unity; and the Lord's supper, which was to be the fullest expression of the unity of Christ's body, became the subject of a heated controversy, and split the Protestant church into fragments.

The discussion that afterward arose about the sovereignty of God and the free will of man brought about further disintegration. Denominational lines were sharply drawn, and the sheep of Christ fenced into different folds. If the letter to Sardis speaks of these things, then it tells us plainly that the Church had a name to live, but was "*dead.*"

The Reformation was a work of divine grace for which we can never be sufficiently thankful. It gave to us an open Bible, and restored to us the blessed doctrine of "justification by faith alone." But the best blessings of God have been abused when intrusted to men. The Word of God, though thus restored, was not regarded as the sufficient rule of faith and practice. If, in theory, it was thought to be so, still it must be said that the creation of creeds testified to its inability to speak plainly about these things.

The Holy Spirit was not restored by the Reformation to His place of supremacy in the Christian Church. Had *He* been acknowledged and honored, there never would have

been this diverse speech of Christendom. Protestantism, however much of a relief from papal tyranny, was no full return to the apostolic church. The fragments of a broken body are all we can claim as the result of the Reformation. There is no real unity when the followers of Christ are separated by so many different opinions as they are to-day. Protestantism thus far has failed to exhibit to the world the unbroken body of Christ.

Froude says, and with more truth than we would perhaps care to own: "Protestantism has made no converts to speak of in Europe since the sixteenth century. It shot up in two generations to its full stature, and became an established creed with defined boundaries; and the many millions who in Catholic countries proclaim their indifference to their religion, either by neglect or contempt, do not now swell the congregations of Protestant church or conventicle. Their objections to the church of Rome are objections equally to all forms of dogmatic and doctrinal Christianity. And so it has come about, that the old enemies are becoming friends in the presence of a common foe. Catholics speak tenderly of Protestants as keeping alive a belief in the creeds, and look forward to their return to the sheepfold; while the old Antichrist, the Scarlet Woman on the Seven Hills, drunk with the blood of the saints, is now treated by Protestantism as an older sister and a valiant ally in the great warfare with infidelity. The points of difference are forgotten; the points of union are passionately dwelt upon; and the remnants of idolatry which the more ardent English Protestants once abhorred and denounced, are now regarded as having been providentially preserved as a means of making up the quarrel and bringing back the churches into communion. The dread of Popery is gone. The ceremonial system, once execrated as a service of Satan, is regarded as a thing at worst indifferent, perhaps in itself desirable; and even those who are conscious of no tendency to what they still call corruption, are practically forsaking the faith of their fathers, and reëstablishing, so

far as they can or dare, those very things which their fathers revolted against." *

To the church in Sardis the Lord presents Himself as having "the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars."

Whatever may be the general drift of things, there is always a possibility of individual loyalty. To such overcomers Christ reveals Himself as possessing the sevenfold energy of the Spirit, and as competent to meet every need of those held in "His right hand." He says: "Thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy."

Viewed as a whole, the churches of the Reformation had a name to live, but are here pronounced *dead.* The vital power is gone from the body which is cut up into fragments. The body of Christ is *one,* not many. There may be many members, but they are the members of *one body.* To divide the body, as has been done by denominational lines, is to deprive it of vitality, and however much it may profess a name to live, it is nevertheless *dead.* A dead profession is what we find everywhere. The church registers are burdened with a long list of names that represent but a lifeless profession. They have indeed a name to live, but are dead. To manifest reality of life, in contrast with these, constitutes the overcomer. Of such in Sardis Christ says: "I will not blot his name out of the book of life." This is not the *Lamb's* Book, afterward spoken of, from which no name could ever be blotted, but is man's book, the church register, and by him regarded as "the book of life." Names enough are written in these books without right or title, and in the time to come they will be blotted out. Only those who have a reality corresponding to the profession of life are enrolled in the Lamb's Book. They are not in contact with the spiritual death around them, which is here counted *defilement* as, in the Old Testament, was considered the touch of a dead body.

Profession without life is an abounding sin. The solemn

* *Short Studies on Great Subjects,* vol. 2, page 132.

thing about it is the awful ability man has to deceive himself in this respect. To have "a name to live," and esteem himself to be alive; to be thought of by others as living and yet, in reality, *dead*. This death is the "wages of sin" which so many men, professing other things, are nevertheless so unweariedly earning.

The overcomer is to be clothed "in white garments," and these are the robes made "white by the blood of the Lamb." Out of death which reigns so universally we are summoned to live: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (JOHN 5:25). The consciousness of spiritual death which has overtaken the churches is the evidence of this voice sounding in the soul, and it has given birth to the undoubted earnestness of desire on the part of many individuals to come out of them altogether. It is useless to deny the reality of our condition. Far better, surely, to own it, in all the depths of its reality before God, and find cleansing in the precious blood of Christ. It is not enough to be reckoned a Christian; it is not enough that our names should be on the church register: there must be a deep underlying reality in correspondence with this. We must be actually what we profess to be, or we are nothing more nor less than hypocrites. In all this we may deceive others, and, what is still more solemn, ourselves. But we cannot deceive God. Christ will redeem His pledges to sinful men that trust Him, but He will blot out the names which, however conspicuously written in man's book, have no title to eternal life.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

VIII

REST FOR AN AGE OF UNREST

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:—These things saith the holy, the true, he that hath the key of David, he who openeth and no one shall shut, and shutteth and no one shall open: I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an opened door which no one can shut; for thou hast a little power, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of temptation which is about to come upon the whole habitable world to try those that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown. He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.—(Chapter 3:7-13.)

THIS letter, together with the following one, brings out the characteristics of the close of the present dispensation. Philadelphia represents a pronounced separation from the dead formalism of Sardis, while Laodicea exhibits the back-flow of present-day evangelism. To Philadelphia the word of Christ is: "I come quickly." To Laodicea: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." In the final development of the Church, Christ is at the door, but outside, and the call is to the individual within. In the letter to Philadelphia there is no word of rebuke. Christ presents Himself as "the holy" and "true." The holiness of our Lord abides, though men lose theirs in their unholy strife over the truth committed to them. His truth remains unfettered, and will not suffer itself to be bound

by articles and credenda, and therein speak the stammering tongues of men.

Holiness and truth are eternal realities apart from any divine revelation whatever. Christ is the embodiment of both. To the Jews of old He said: "Ye search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (JOHN 5:39). There was plenty of creed, and formal statement of Scripture when Christ appeared, but no recognition of *Him*. The Bible constitutes a living organism, and the dissection of it means death. It was sectional strife over the meaning of God's Word which produced the death spoken of in Sardis. In Philadelphia there is a revival from this death, and the Person of Christ becomes the gathering center of all that are weary with the strife of tongues.

The Scriptures testify of Him, and He is "holy and true." He is spoken of also as having "the key of David, He who openeth and no one shall shut, and shutteth and no one shall open." It is either David's house or "David's kingdom," but of each He holds "the key"—the symbol of authority. David's house has been long in ruins; his descendants persecuted, and scattered over the face of the earth. His kingdom has vanished, and so hopelessly disappeared, that men have despaired of its revival. But David's house is not forgotten of God, and his kingdom must be established again, or else the written promises are of no value whatever.

Christ presents Himself here as David's legal heir, holding the key of authority, and having power to reëstablish David's house, and open the door of the promised kingdom. To whom He willeth He openeth the door which none can shut, and against whom He willeth He shutteth the door which none can open.

As "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto" David, when, though anointed king he was hiding in the cave of Adullam, so are they gathering unto Christ

while, though the crown be rightly His, He is in the place of "witness indeed" * of rejection by the world. To such as rally around Him, rather than around any doctrinal statement of His word (which needs no human support of this kind), He says: "I know thy works." To them also He flings wide open the door of the coming kingdom: "Behold I have set before thee an opened door which no one can shut."

The "theological giants," as men count them, are those who are contending for the integrity of the Scriptures. It might be well for us to remember that these Scriptures of God require no defense, but are for the purpose of defending us. The ark of God needs no human hand to steady it, and many a man, like Uzzah, has perished in the attempt. Many of these conflicts have been over man-made creeds. Men have fought for *doctrine,* when they believed themselves fighting for the Word of God. The Scriptures have survived through the conflict of ages, and we would do well to leave them to take care of themselves, and rally round the Person whom they so plainly declare. A man may disclaim all authority over the conscience save the Word of God alone; he may keep out of the conflict in which nothing is accomplished save further confusion of mind as to the real meaning of God's Word; he may deny the right of anyone to bind his conscience by mere human opinion which lays claim to authority from the Word itself; he may refuse to be held by the "tradition of the elders," however venerable the names; he may insist upon his mind being untrammeled by the hoary interpretations handed down from one commentator to another; he may refuse to walk in the beaten path, which too often leads him into the woods, and seek for the truth at the Fountain Head; he may venture, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit alone, into the green fields and beside the still waters, and seek to find there companionship with Christ and a knowl-

* *Adullam,* in Hebrew is a compound of the word "*justice,*" and the word "*people,*" and the most literal rendering of the term has been given as "in very deed a witness."

edge of truth which will make him free: but if he do this, he is regarded as a "separatist," and makes no conspicuous exhibit where the smoke of battle seems to be rising. Let him be such an independent seeker after the truth, he may yet find what others in going with the multitude have missed. For him there will be the "open door" which no man can shut; a vision through it, too, of the reëstablishment of David's house and David's throne. To get away from the strife of tongues; to avoid the defilement of, and to get away from, all contact with the dead formalism in Sardis; to get back to Christ under the leadership of the Holy Ghost; to give up man's opinions and find *Jesus* is what is commended here. Whatever the denominational banner floating above, to stand beneath it, and *there* keep, at all cost, Christ's word, and not deny His name. God gave to the world, not an inflexible creed, but a life-giving Word.

We need to remember that God's Word does not, necessarily, need a specialist for its exposition. Specialists there are, but they all get their equipment where every child of God can be equally equipped, and without respect of person.

We have lost sight of the glorious fact that the Holy Spirit came to guide us into all truth. He is Patron of no one that lays claim to any special equipment or endowment. He is God's Gift, and has His indwelling in God's temple, which is Christ's body, the Church. We show our guilty indifference to Him when we blindly follow blind guides, and all of us tumble into the ditch together.

Christ is "holy," and Christ is "true," and, in all the glorious reality of His person, is set before us in these Scriptures of God. It is the work of the Spirit to lead us to Him, that we may become occupied with Him, and that we may live in constant association with Him, and this is glory, and sanctification, and power for service.

They that rally round Him, rally round one another, and so establish on earth a body of Philadelphians bound together by, what the word Philadelphia means, "brotherly love."

Among such every personal opinion must be loyally subordinated to the Word of God. The right of private judgment was insisted on at the Reformation, but this right is disallowed by the Bible where it speaks plainly, and it insists upon being interpreted according to the plain meaning of its language.

A spirit of unrest is upon a certain class of men who have undertaken to reset the foundation of truth. They tell us they intend to cleave to the heart of things, and discover the bed-rock of truth. They have slipped from the old moorings and are adrift on the open sea. They profess a hatred of dogmatism, and yet immediately advance new principles which are nothing more nor less than their dogma. They give us what they call "Rest for an Age of Unrest."

A recent writer, and we may believe him sincere enough, has expressed the thought in this "new" gospel. But where does he stand? To what would he summon us? Here is what he calls the Christianity of Christ: "It may all be summed up in one word that implies two other words and two other experiences. That word is *Fatherhood.* Other men had spoken of God by this title before, in fact it is almost the universal word concerning God, but Jesus put a new content into the word. In his mind God was the Father of Men—of all men, at all times, everywhere. He knew no high, no low, no great, no small. In his estimation all of the sons of men were the children of God. All the way from the carpenter's bench to Calvary, here is a man who seemed to be conscious of God, of the kindness, compassion and love of God. Jesus believed that God was what God ought to be. His idea of the Fatherhood of God gave him his consciousness that he was God's son. It presented him with a great estimate of the value of the individual—one man worth more than the material universe, man a living soul worthy to be called the son of God. This idea of the sonship of man answered his questions concerning destiny and opportunity. He thought that any man would be right when he was will-

ing to say from his heart 'My Father,' and act as though he were the son of God. One thing more—Fatherhood, Sonship, Brotherhood. There is no Fatherless Brotherhood. There is a reason why men are related in every real fashion. Jesus said, When you pray say 'Our Father,' and this meant that we are also to say even unto the wickedest, meanest, vilest, lowest of the race, My brother. Every burden would grow light for us if we only learned, as Jesus seemed to learn, how to interest ourselves unselfishly in the life of humanity. Wanted! the length of a human life, your life and mine, lived in the spirit of this man of Nazareth, whose name we honor and love!"

According to this gospel, this is the kind of God that God "ought to be," and what Jesus *believed* Him to be. But its exponent cannot find this God in the Scriptures where he found Jesus, and because he cannot there find a God which measures up to his ideal of what God ought to be, he slips his neck from the yoke of Scripture, and clothes an ideal with the characteristics of his imaginary God, and calls it Jesus. The Deity of Jesus is gone. According to his teaching, Christ is an "ideal man," nothing more, and other men ought to live as He lived, and be as He was, saviours of the world.

Think of the blasphemy contained in such lines as these!

"Whenever the Christmas season
Lends luster and peace to the year,
And the ling-long-ling of the bells that ring
Tell only of joy and cheer,
I hear in their sweet, wild music
These words, and I hold them true:
'The Christ who was born on the Christmas morn
Did only what you can do.'

"Each soul that has breath and being
Is touched with heaven's own fire,
Each living man is part of the plan
To lift the world up higher.

No matter how narrow your limits,
Go forth and make them broad!
You are every one the daughter or son—
Crown prince or princess of God.

"Have you sinned? It is only an error—
Your spirit is pure and white.
It is Truth's own ray and will find its way
Back into the path of right.
Have you failed? It is only in seeming—
The triumph will come at length.
You were born to succeed, you will have what you need,
If you will but believe in your strength.

"No matter how poor your record—
Christ lives in the heart of you,
And the shadow will roll up and off from your soul,
If you will but own this true.
For 'Christ' means the spirit of goodness,
And all men are good at the core,
Look searchingly in thro' the coating of sin,
And, lo! there is Truth to adore.

"Believe in yourself and your motives,
Believe in your strength and your worth,
Believe you were sent from God's fair firmament
To aid and ennoble the Earth.
Believe in the Saviour within you—
Know Christ and your spirit are one,
Stand forth deified by your own noble pride,
And whatever you ask shall be done."

Such is the "gospel" proposed for "the age of unrest." As a matter of fact it is no gospel whatsoever. It is a *theory,* advanced to the dishonor of Christ, and to the exaltation of man. The final form of this doctrine is the last and great apostasy wherein "the man of sin" shall be revealed, "the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is

God" (2 THESS. 2:3-4). The teachings of this spurious gospel seem designed to cultivate the "Philadelphian" character. "Brotherly love" is magnified, but by means of the unscriptural doctrine of "The universal brotherhood of man and the common Fatherhood of God." The exponents of this theory claim in support of it the teaching of Jesus. But let us examine Scripture, and by it test this claim.

Sonship, such as implied in these systems, is, according to Scripture, founded on new birth. The express declaration is: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them he gave authority to become children of God,—to those believing on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (JOHN 1:11-13, Gr.).

The doctrine of sonship taught in the Old Testament is altogether of a different character, and implies neither the possession of spiritual life nor salvation. The Fatherly relation of God to Israel spoken of by the prophets gives expression, without exception, to a relationship assumed toward Israel on the part of God as their Creator. For example: "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?" (MAL. 2:10). This same relationship is affirmed in Psalms and Proverbs and in the same way. In the one hundred and third Psalm the expression is somewhat reserved: "*Like as* a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him: for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." Referring to the same relationship, Paul, quoting one of their own poets, says to the Athenians: "For we are also his offspring" (ACTS 17:28).

Angels, like men, are also creatures of God, and on the ground of creation are called "the sons of God." As the Creator of all, God is the "Father of spirits." By creation there is given to man a spiritual nature which gives him the image of God, but, if the character of the man does not conform to this new nature, the relationship therein implied will not be owned by God. The claim to such a relationship by the unbe-

lieving Jews was repudiated by Jesus. They said to Him: "We have one Father, God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I came forth from God, and am come [from him]: for neither am I come of myself, but *he* sent me. Why do ye not know my speech? Because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of the devil [your] father, and the lusts of your father ye desire to do" (JOHN 8: 41-44, Gr.). Jesus in these words refuses to allow them to claim God as their Father while they have no corresponding spiritual character.

The Old Testament doctrine of "Fatherhood and sonship" is one that recognizes such relationship by virtue of the original creation; whereas the New Testament doctrine recognizes no such relationship except on the ground of a *new* creation. The Jews through sin had forfeited, even on the ground of original creation, their title to sonship, and nothing short of a new creation could establish them in the relationship of sonship such as is defined in the New Testament.

"As many as received him, to them gave he *the right* to become children of God" (JOHN 1: 12, R. V.). The right to assume this place is justified by the fact of a divine work having been wrought in them. "They are born again, not of blood—the way of natural birth; nor of the will of man—even when renewed; but of God, and God only." This is the *only* ground recognized in the New Testament on which a man can stand, and lay claim to the title of being "a son of God." To claim the common Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man is to ignore, as this so-called new gospel uniformly does, the effect of the Fall. Sin and misery, it is true, are not ignored; they are everywhere too manifest; but, that man is helpless and undone as the effect of sin is not admitted. There is, consequently, no need of a Saviour. Men are exhorted to lay claim to a title which has been forfeited by them. To insist upon the common Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man is to raise the question, humanly speaking, of the character of God Himself. The fact is, that

sin has entered into the world, and with the result that "death has passed upon all men." The whole world is guilty before God, and destitute of *any* claim upon Him. Man is lost. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (LUKE 19:10). So many as receive *Him* get the right to become the children of God. Such believers are born again; a divine work is wrought in them, and they are the objects of divine grace. To include others, who are in rebellion against God and Christ, in the place of a common sonship is to disavow the necessity of the new birth, and to do dishonor to Christ who proclaimed it. Such an heretical gospel has no comfort in it for them that are burdened with the sense of sin, and conscious of having no spiritual character corresponding to the title given them.

Paul preached no gospel such as this, but one that fully meets the need of men as this spurious one by no possibility can. To him all men were lost and undone, absolutely ungodly, and without strength; and, more than this, destitute of anything that could properly be considered life in the sight of God. But to men, even in such a condition as this, Paul proclaims a gospel which is good news, indeed, as the word implies. To the Ephesians he writes: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (EPH. 2:1-3). Here he gives us a picture of man's condition by nature, out of which nothing could possibly bring him but a divine quickening. The natural man is not the son of God; he is dead; and God is not the Father of the dead, but of the living. You may preach to the dead, but there will be no response unless indeed there be a quickening out of this death, and this is possible to God alone. Man is beyond the reach of self-recovery, and for him there is

no help but in the sovereign grace of God, and that sovereign grace of God has been revealed.

Christ is the Saviour of sinners. To as many as receive Him He gives authority to become the sons of God. Apart from Christ such relationship is not owned of God. To maintain the universal Fatherhood of God is to do so in defiance of Scripture, and to the discredit of Christ. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus with a kiss. To exalt the natural man in opposition to Christ's own declaration concerning him, while, at the same time, claiming to love and honor Jesus, is nothing short of the treason of Judas. Whatever pretense there may be of magnifying the spirit of brotherly love, and however desirable it may be that such a spirit should pervade the world, it is nevertheless wicked to assert as true what we know to be notoriously false. It is utterly useless to urge men to correspond to a character which they do not possess, and for the manifestation of which, there is absolutely no resource in themselves. A true Philadelphian is marked by no broad catholicity such as this, but is one of whom Christ could say: "Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." This is, in fact, what constitutes the Philadelphian. "Thou hast kept *my* word." This does not mean keeping what men have *thought* about Christ's word, or what Bible students, however trusted, may have declared it to be. What is presented for our acceptance is not what has filtered through man's mind and come out in articles and credenda, but is what the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has said.

To get back to Christ, and to be no longer in bondage to human opinion, or tradition, or ecclesiastical declaration, is what characterizes the true Philadelphian. The assaults that are being made upon the Word of God need not concern us so very much. This eternal fortress will stand, though the last man drop from the battlements. We are not to be concerned about the issue of a conflict over the integrity of a book which possesses internal and unassailable evidence of divine inspiration; in short, we are not to fight for the Word,

but we are to *keep* it. This is what Christ approves: "Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." To deny Christ's name is to deny the character which that name gives Him. His name proclaims Him as One absolutely unique among the sons of men. He is not merely the Son of man, He is also the Son of God. He is what the prophets proclaimed Him, IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US.

No man before Him ever lived as He did; no man after Him ever lived as He lived. To live as He lived would, indeed, be desirable, if by any possibility it could be. Christ is the pattern of what men ought to be, but He is more than this; He is the Saviour of men: and "God has given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (PHIL. 2:9-11). Therefore, to keep His word, and not deny His name, constitutes the true Philadelphian. To such He says: "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." If there be a true return of heart to the Person of the Lord Jesus, and to the simplicity of His word, such as was manifest in apostolic times, it is no wonder if Satan return to his old method of attack upon the Church. Man is essentially the same in all ages, and Satan knows that the snare set before the apostolic church will operate with equal effect against any return to apostolic simplicity.

Nevertheless to those that so return Christ says: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of temptation which is about to come upon the whole habitable world to try those that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown." The hour of Christ's patience, here spoken of, is the time of His present rejection. This age, characterized by rebellion against God, and the outbreak of the lusts

of men, is patiently endured by Him. The disorders on every side cannot pass beyond the limit of divine restraint. Out of all the misery and mystery and darkness of unbelief God will bring His eternal purpose to a triumphant issue. This is the time of His patience, and if Christ can endure what is going on and still be patient with it; surely we, too, can also be patient even as He is. The time of trial of which He speaks is yet to come; it is "the great tribulation" mentioned by the prophet Daniel, and referred to by Jesus in His prophecy on the Mount of Olives. Christ has pledged His word to keep the true believer out of this hour. The removal of the Church prior to the tribulation will come before us in its proper place.

The promise to the overcomer is in beautiful harmony with the character exhibited by the Philadelphian. "He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and my new name." At the entrance of the Temple of Solomon there stood two magnificent pillars. On the one was written the word "Jachin," and on the other the word "Boaz." The word Jachin means, "He establishes"; and the word Boaz means, "In Him is strength." These meanings are significant also of the character of those found in the Philadelphian church, and what a blessed thing to believe, that all strength for His creatures is found in Him, and that He alone has ability to establish the soul in a place of absolute security. The overcomer shall give testimony, in the reward given him, to the strength which has sustained him throughout, and to the grace which enabled him to be what he was. Out of the temple he shall go no more. He has learned the lesson, so difficult for natural man, that apart from God and His grace no man can live. The name of God, and the name of the city of God, and the new name of Christ, written upon them, testify to the truth that they are overcomers and belong to God. God has been the object before them, and

they have looked for, and found the city which hath foundations whose builder and maker God is. The "new name" of Christ will tell out the glory of Him through whom, and by whom, all has been brought to pass.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

IX

STANDING AT THE DOOR

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea, write:—These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. So, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have grown rich, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art the wretched and miserable one, even poor and blind and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not be manifested; and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me. He that overcometh, to him will I give to sit with me in my throne; as I also overcame, and have sat down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.—(Chapter 3: 14-22.)

ANOTHER phase of the Church which is painfully manifest in these last days is now before us. There has been a development of evil from the first. Protestantism was a revolt from Romanism, and the two go on, side by side, until the coming of the Lord. Philadelphia is a revival out of the dead formalism of Sardis, and a true return in heart to the Person and Word of Christ. This also is coexistent with Romanism and Protestantism to the end.

Laodicea pictures the condition of the Protestant church in general after the last revival has swept over her. Times of revival are usually followed by periods of great spiritual reaction, and every time the tide recedes, the shore line lies

further away. It is possible that Philadelphia and Laodicea may represent the double and final issue of what is found in Sardis. In this case, Philadelphia would be taken up when the Lord comes, and Laodicea run parallel with Thyatira through the great tribulation. There is, at least, a solemn suggestion of this in the promise to Philadelphia: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of temptation which is about to come upon the whole habitable world to try those that dwell upon the earth."

Thyatira, certainly, will not be exempt from the great tribulation, but will pass into it and find judgment at the end. Connected with Thyatira, in all the years of her development, there have been those who could properly be spoken of as overcomers. To them Christ could say: "Hold fast till I come." And, inasmuch as the system goes on till He comes, there will doubtless be found in her individuals of the Philadelphian character, who shall not be in revolt as the others. To them that make a mere nominal profession of faith, the coming of Christ shall be entirely unexpected and shall, consequently, find them unprepared. They have been warned earnestly and plainly; but the warning has had no effect upon them. Speaking of His coming, Jesus says to such: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (MATT. 24: 42-44). A statement similar to the one found in the letter to Sardis is made by Paul: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 THESS. 5:2-4). In

like manner Peter speaks: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 PET. 3:9-10). Neither of these apostles gives the slightest intimation of any long delay of centuries before the day of Christ should be ushered in. The time was not known to any of the apostles, and in fact was known only to the Father, as Scripture plainly affirms. The coming of the day, however, was sure, and when it dawned upon the world, it would be heralded by the muttering storm of impending judgment. It would find them unprepared, as in the day of Noah, when the flood came with sudden destruction and swept them all away. For this day, whenever it should come, the Church was exhorted to *watch* so as not be taken unawares. It is to be observed here that in the use of this word *watch* there seems to be a clearly cut distinction from the word *wait* which is also used in reference to the coming of our Lord. The admonition to true believers is to wait for the Lord from heaven. (1 THESS. 1:10. 1 COR. 1:7). Such an admonition could not be addressed to the mere nominal professor. When Israel is under consideration, or the kingdom of heaven as representing the church visible, the word *watch* is uniformly used. It is not until after the wise virgins have gone in, and the door is shut, that the admonition to watch is given. (MATT. 25:1-13). In our Lord's great prophecy the same admonition is manifestly in connection with the time of Israel's restoration, and is in reference to His coming glory at the end of the age. (MATT. 24:42-51). The true believers wait for their Lord from heaven. All others are solemnly warned to watch. Such is the manifest distinction implied in the use of the terms.

The coming of Christ was spoken of in a way to justify the

hope of His speedy return. In apostolic days, and those immediately following, this was the blessed hope that animated and sustained the disciples of Jesus in every trial. But as the years went by, and the Lord did not come, hope died out, and the Church expected Him no longer. Only here and there a solitary watcher disturbed her slumber with the proclamation of Christ's coming. The "blessed hope" was replaced by the thought of the world's conversion to Christ by the preaching of the gospel; and, cherishing this illusion, the Church fell into a sleep still more profound.

In the parable of the virgins we are expressly told that this deep sleep was because of the bridegroom's delay. No thought of a coming thief disturbed them. Disordered fancies and vain imaginations took the place of sound reasoning and simple trust in the Word of God. The Church dreamed she had fallen heir to promises that belonged to Israel alone, and instead of holding fast the fundamental truth of having been *called out* of the world, she cherished the hope of being established a kingdom *in it*. When the hope of the immediate return of Christ was lost, the Church was already far gone in decline; her heavenly character was lost by her affiliation with the world, and the effort to establish herself there. As the result she sank down into the coma of "the dark ages." In the black embrace of this she lay until the voice of Martin Luther rose like a cry at midnight: "Behold the bridegroom cometh."

Though the Reformation was a genuine revival of spiritual life, the Church soon settled back into the region of death pictured to us in the letter to Sardis. A quickening from this death is represented by the Philadelphians, and to them is made the announcement: "I come quickly." To all others that remain in the death state of Sardis the word is: "I will come upon thee as a thief." A thief is always an unexpected visitor; he comes and rifles the house, and in the morning we find he has been and gone, and taken what he valued with him. After this manner Christ will come upon Sardis, and

take away what He values; what in fact is really His own—the true Philadelphian found in it; and the residue shall sink into the awful self-deception of Laodicea. The true believers shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and there shall be left upon earth what may indeed proclaim itself Christian, though it be in fact only a decaying carcass around which the vultures shall gather. This also marks the time of Rome's imperial expansion and catholicity to which the stream of modern unbelief and churchly rationalism is trending. Rome shall ascend the long coveted throne of temporal power, and the whole mass of professed Christianity shall lapse into open and defiant infidelity. Such is the general apostasy that shall toll in "the great day of God Almighty." Once more the word rings out: "Behold I come as a thief" (REV. 16:15). Immediately thereafter: "Babylon the great came into remembrance before God to give her the cup of the wine of the indignation of his wrath." This "great Babylon" is Thyatira and Laodicea united, and appears as "a woman clothed in purple" riding the scarlet beast of imperial power.

We cannot escape the conviction, that what remains upon earth as the professing church, after the true believer has been taken out of it, will pass into the great tribulation. We may cherish the hope, however, that an opportunity may be given her to repent, and escape the doom which finally overtakes the impenitent. Christ may come at any moment, and what if we, in spite of all our profession, should be compelled to pass through the time of unequaled trouble now impending? It is blessed to think that God's grace and mercy may, and surely will, cover this period when His judgment is executed upon the earth. Christ has not changed, though things here have, and gone from bad to worse in the Church.

In the salutation of grace, which we had at the beginning, Christ was "The faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead"; and now here at the end of things, we find Him of the same unchangeable character. He is the "Amen, the

faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Man's failure cannot make Christ other than He is. In the judgment hall of Pontius Pilate He said: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (JOHN 18:37).

To reveal the truth was the purpose of Christ's mission among men. We need not look elsewhere for it. The natural man does not love it; he has no desire to be exposed by it. Truth is absolutely imperial; it searches a man through and through; it "is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (HEB. 4:12). You can trifle with it, but you cannot force it to adapt itself to your wish or will; you can neither twist it, nor distort it, nor by any loud assertion of what you *think* it is or what you think it *ought* to be, force it to be other than it is. It is the searchlight of Almighty God before which the darkness flees. It is the last analysis of man in the whole mental, moral, and physical part of him. We are in a world of unreality; we are surrounded on every side by delusion, imposture, and sham. In the natural world moral confusion reigns throughout, and to shut the eyes to this is to close them to the truth which is solemnly affirmed by the Word of God.

Nothing but a new creation can redeem us from the delusion of the first creation which has been darkened by the awful shadow of sin. God declines to be charged with the moral disorders of the world. Satan, whether we be able to account for him or not, is the god of this age, and is the originator of all the hypocrisy, and sin, and meanness found among men. He is the author of confusion, and strife, and rebellion against the Most High. He wrought havoc with the original creation, and is chargeable with it. Into this scene of moral disorder Jesus Christ came, pro-

claiming the whole truth as to man and his condition. But why was it that so few were found willing to listen to Him, or to follow Him? He Himself has given us the true answer: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (JOHN 3:19-20).

Christ was probing the conscience of Pontius Pilate when He said to him, "He that is of the truth heareth *my* voice." "What is truth?" said that old Roman, and then, never waiting for an answer, left the judgment hall. What is the use of asking about truth if there be neither purpose nor desire to follow it when found? Christ has declared the truth about us all, and because we do not find it acceptable, we do not hesitate to be at issue with Him. As men come into this world they possess by nature nothing which in the sight of God constitutes life in any true sense. Tell men this, and they will contest it, even with Christ Himself.

The solemn fact, never to be withdrawn while the curse of sin abides, is: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." It is of this new creation Christ is speaking, when, at the head of this letter, He declares Himself to be "The beginning of the creation of God." "If any man is in Christ," says the apostle, "there is a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 COR. 5:17. R. V. Marg.). This is the truth, and men may lose their reason over it, but it cannot be overthrown. "Ye shall know the truth," Christ said, "and the truth shall make you free" (JOHN 8:32). Truth leads to freedom when it is owned, accepted, and followed. When a man undertakes to debate the question of truth with God, he is bound hand and foot by the error for which he is contending. God has spoken, and there is nothing more to be said, and Jesus Christ is the concluding word, the "Amen." To know Him; to bow to His authority; to accept all that

He says, as the full and final truth, is the only way to discover the eternal foundations on which we can build without fear of the coming storm of judgment.

What does Christ say about this Laodicean church? "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. So, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spew thee out of my mouth." Let the tide of revival sweep over a congregation, and when the backflow is gone there is left nothing but this: "Neither cold nor hot."

In the letter to Sardis we have a picture of the Protestant church in general. It has a name to live, but is pronounced dead. It is this dead profession that weights and sinks the Church. Let a revival come to a congregation, and these dead members may be warmed, but you cannot give them life. Worse even than this lukewarmness is the self-deception which has come in with it. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have grown rich, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art the wretched and miserable one, even poor and blind and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, that the shame of thy nakedness may not be manifested; and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see."

In an institution for the insane there was a patient who thought himself to be Napoleon Bonaparte. There was no moral responsibility in this, and he may have been happy in the delusion. In the Laodicean character there is a self-deception, which is nothing short of moral insanity. "Rich and increased with goods," is the true picture of many a church organization. They can boast of material possessions, while they are absolutely destitute of all spiritual life. Money, in many quarters, has come to be regarded as the indispensable instrument for the extension of the kingdom of Christ on earth. The cold proposition is sent broad-cast, that, if we only had the money, the world might be converted

in this generation. While the boast of independent riches is everywhere heard, the real poverty of the Church is exposed by this never-ceasing plea for money. "Rich and increased with goods," but nevertheless destitute of spiritual momentum. Magnificent church edifices; imposing ritualistic services; artistic and expensive music, too often furnished by the utterly godless; high-salaried preachers who, if they are willing to take Balak's gold, are careful also to preach according to Balak's taste; churches like these there are, and without number, and it is absolutely impossible to cover their spiritual poverty by any loud boast of material prosperity. In these churches the poor and sinful are not wanted; it is a notorious fact, that they are not wanted; and they know it; and by no possibility can they be induced to come in where they know only a chill awaits them. These churches want quality, not quantity. To say that such churches where no welcome is given to the poor, and where the dying sons of men could get no gospel even though they were to come in, constitute the Church of Christ is to bear witness to the awful deception which people have so willingly imposed upon themselves. It is useless to appeal for means to convert the heathen, while we ourselves remain unconverted. It would be difficult to give expression to a more refined form of selfishness than is found in some of our modern churches. The first consideration personal comfort; the service attractive; the preaching, gospel or no, popular; the pews filled; the treasury replete; comfortable, warm, and well fed, though with the husks that the swine do eat; and conscience undisturbed by the tramp, tramp, tramp of the unregenerate without. Is this picture overdrawn? No. Is it inaccurate in any of its pencilings? Yes, in its under-statements; for every detail that might be added would deepen and darken the lines of condemnation. Call this Christ's Church, if you will, and those on the outside do it with a sneer, yet Christ will not own it as His, but declares: "I will spew thee out of my mouth."

There is another form of self-deception which is, in some

respects, worse even than this; it is the boast of spiritual perfection which we hear more and more loudly proclaimed in these last days. Teachers are abroad, who, claiming high spiritual attainment, have led men to despair. It is a common pretension of the day, that it is possible to attain absolute holiness. Yet he who makes this claim ignores God's standard, and measures himself by a standard of his own. The Bible says: "If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (GAL. 6:3). Whoever thought himself to be something without being nothing? Christ's standard has never yet been lowered; it is this: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (MATT. 5:48). Man may juggle with the words, and make them mean something less than this, but he knows in his heart that God, if He demand anything of us, will accept nothing short of absolute holiness. These teachers have ventured to assert that they have attained this, but such a pretension cannot do otherwise than depreciate the work of Christ. It leads to self-confidence, self-occupation, and spiritual pride, and these were the propelling forces that accomplished the rebellion and ruin of Satan. There is a necessity for holiness, which the Bible everywhere affirms, but the subtle danger is that man may deceive himself with the thought of finding this holiness in himself, where, naturally enough, he might look for it. Heresies have arisen out of this, to the destruction of all true standards; even the Lord Himself has been accused of having a fallen nature; and the statement follows, that we must conquer sin as He conquered it. For the evil that man finds within him, he no longer regards himself responsible, but throws this responsibility upon Satan to whom the evil is imputed.

This doctrine of Christian perfection is a subtle form of Laodiceanism from which we are in more danger than from the grosser forms of materialism of the day. "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (HEB. 12:14) will never be found in mere man. If he thinks so, he is self-deceived.

But if he cannot find it in *himself,* and yet must have it, then he must find it somewhere else. The word in the revised version is "sanctification," and is preceded by the definite article. It should read like this: "Follow after peace with all men, and *the* santification, without which no man shall see the Lord." What then is the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord? Paul tells us plainly: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and *sanctification,* and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 COR. 1:30, 31. R. V.).

In this verse we have the sum and substance of all spiritual possessions that we can call our own. Righteousness is provided for the sinner. It is found, not in him, but in Christ. Man, tested in every way, proved himself to be destitute of all righteousness. Christ's righteousness, in the wisdom of God, is made available for him, and in this robe alone he has standing before God. Not only is the robe of righteousness provided for the sinner, but provision is also made to meet a still deeper need. The robe is not merely a covering for the sinner, leaving him in the same condition he was in before. In Christ we are to find not only righteousness but sanctification and redemption. In Scripture sanctification is spoken of as positional, and practical. The word "sanctification" means "set apart for God." Jesus says: "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (JOHN 17:19). Here He speaks of the setting apart of Himself to God for the purpose of accomplishing a work for man. There could be no spiritual change in Jesus. No divine work was necessary to make Him better than He was. He was morally perfect, and when He says, "I sanctify myself," He means that He is taking a definite position before God in behalf of others. As man He came into the world; as man He died; and as man He has gone back to God. He became man for us. He was set apart to God for this work: that He might die

for us, and rise again. In Him there was no personal imperfection. For Himself He did not die. He died for us, and as our representative He went in to God, and by His blood we are sanctified. We are "set apart" by the virtue of that blood, and are given a place of unchangeable favor before God. This is plainly what Paul means when he says: "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (HEB. 10:10). This is positional sanctification. It is unchangeable as the apostle assures us: "By one offering He hath perfected *forever* them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10: 14). This literally should read: "He hath perfected in *perpetuity* them that are sanctified." The value of the blood abides. No further sacrifice is necessary. Christ has suffered once for all. His work for man has been accepted. The blood atones for the soul, and perfects in perpetuity them that are sanctified by it. This is not practical sanctification, but positional. It is our standing before God, secured for us by His precious blood. Our identification with Christ in death and resurrection makes possible, and leads to, practical sanctification. Death and resurrection imply the end of the old creation, and the beginning of the new. Being born again by faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit operates upon us through the Word of God. He reveals to us truth, which cannot be received or known by the natural man because it is spiritually discerned. Born again, we have a new nature, which responds to the Word of God, and that Word, in the power of the Holy Spirit, works in us a practical sanctification. This is brought about in a simple, yet marvelous way. It is never obtained by looking within ourselves. The Spirit leads in a direction totally different. This is what He tells us, all simple enough surely, but of amazing import: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (COL. 3: 3).

"In Christ," is the keynote of the epistle to the Ephesians, in which epistle is given us the height of Christian position. This expression, "in Christ," gives the prevailing character, not only to the epistle to the Ephesians, but also to all other

apostolic writings. The Church is "in Christ"; individuals are "in Christ." They are "found in Christ"; "preserved in Christ"; "saved in Christ"; "sanctified in Christ"; "rooted in Christ"; "built up in Christ"; "made perfect in Christ." This positional sanctification is to be made manifest in practical sanctification. The believer is to have his heart "in Christ"; his conversation "in Christ"; his faith "in Christ"; his hope "in Christ"; his love "in Christ"; his joy "in Christ"; his whole life "in Christ." He is to think, to speak, to walk, to labor, to suffer, to sorrow, to rejoice, to conquer, "in the Lord." All distinctions, even of the broadest nature, vanish away in this new-found and glorious relationship. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (GAL. 3:28). This common bond of fellowship with Christ gives character to every action of believers, and they "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." The truth they hold is "in Jesus." The will that governs them is "the will of God in Christ Jesus." This character abides with them in the midst of all changes. They "live in Christ"; they "die in the Lord"; they "sleep in Jesus." When He shall appear, they "also appear with him in glory"; when He reigns, they also "reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." All they have, whether they live or die, is "in Christ."

But Christ is not on the earth; He is in heaven. Our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption are "in him." This truth, enforced upon us by the Holy Spirit in the Word, turns our eyes away from ourselves, and fixes them upon Christ. To be occupied with self is despair; to be occupied with Christ is glory. "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (2 COR. 3:18. R. V. Marg.). This is the way, and the only way, that practical holiness can be attained. To deny this and to boast of spiritual riches apart from Christ

is to fall into the self-deception of the Laodiceans. Surely we are rich enough in Christ not to be overwhelmed by our own poverty. In Christ we may glory with full heart and with full praise. In Him is found "gold tried in the fire," symbol of divine glory; "white raiment," symbol of His righteousness, our robe now; "eye-salve," symbol of the anointing by the Holy Spirit, the only remedy for spiritual blindness. To the Laodicean church, boasting of other things than these, He says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me."

What a blessed interchange of hospitality! Though the door be opened—and who but Himself could do it?—we have, in our utter poverty, little to set before Him. He, coming in, brings our riches with Him.

The supper is the evening meal; it is the last taken before the morning breaks, and the day dawns. It is long since the apostle said: "The night is far spent; the day is at hand." To sup with Him before the morning breaks is the foretaste of coming glory, the antepast of heaven.

"At even, then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: and in the morning, ye shall see the glory of the Lord" (Ex. 16:6-7).

Christ is now waiting until His enemies be made His footstool. Such is the declaration of the one hundred and tenth Psalm.

Slowly, but surely, all opposition to Him is giving way, and the hour is coming when His enemies shall be made His footstool, and He shall leave the Father's throne and ascend His own. The last enemy to be destroyed is death, and with that gone there shall be no longer need of mediatorial intercession; the Church militant shall be the Church triumphant. This also is the hour of Christ's manifest glory. On the ruins of the kingdoms of this world the throne of Christ shall rise. He shall reign from sea to sea. The whole world shall be full of His glory. This is the predetermined issue of the

eternal purpose established by the immutable decree of Almighty God. Christ shall reign, and the Church glorified shall reign with Him.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

X

HEAVEN OPENED

After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard as of the trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee what must take place after these things. Immediately I became in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne; and he that sat was like in appearance to a jasper and a sardine stone; and a rainbow was round about the throne in appearance like unto an emerald. And round the throne were four and twenty thrones; and upon the thrones, four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and upon their heads golden crowns.—(Chapter 4: 1-4.)

THE second division of the book is now opened. The seven letters sketch with inspired accuracy the entire history of the Church on earth. The Church here is the kingdom of heaven in *mystery* form; we are now to see the process of bringing that kingdom into manifestation.

Through the Christian ages Christ, though having all things under perfect control, has left His kingdom to the administration of man. He has not interfered with its development, but, with warnings against maladministration during His absence, has kept it in full survey. He apparently has allowed things to go on as if He took no account of them. In the Gospel of Mark we have a parable of this: "And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest has come" (MARK 4: 26-29).

God has at no time vacated His throne, nor has He permitted evil to manifest itself beyond the restraint He has imposed upon it. A field, ripening for the harvest, is God's own picture of His kingdom. The seed sown was good wheat, but the enemy came in and sowed tares; they were to grow on together till the harvest, and the harvest was to be at "the end of the age." It is this harvesting of the earth at the end of the age which we are now to consider.

Up to this point we have been occupied with the history of the Church on earth. The ending of that history brings us to the end of the age, and into the midst of another scene altogether. The true Church is no longer upon earth, and when again brought to our attention is enthroned in heaven. The manner of her removal from the earth will come before us directly. The apostate church remains upon the earth after the removal of the true, and ripens fast for the harvest at hand.

"After these things," says John,—that is, after the things brought before us in the seven letters to the churches,—"I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard as of the trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee what must take place after these things." It is not simply what is to take place *hereafter,* as in the common version, but "after these things" of which he has already told us. He is about to tell us what shall take place after the Church is taken from the earth. In the present vision a door opens, and the scene shifts from earth to heaven. Jesus is no longer seen as a mediatorial Priest, "walking in the midst of the lampstands," but comes before us in an entirely different character, and for the execution of other purposes. John is summoned by the trumpet voice to enter heaven and see from that viewpoint what is about to take place. "Immediately," he says, "I became in the Spirit." Here is the same expression we had before. It defines no experience common to believers, but it implies a special work of the Spirit, that enables John to see,

and describe with accuracy, the visions which passed before him. He became absorbed in the Holy Spirit. He was inspired to see and hear and write. In the visions about to be given him there is the unfolding of the ages in the eternal purposes of God. By the influence of the Spirit he receives, and through the same influence communicates to us what he sees and hears. There is no possibility for the so-called *human element* to weaken the full-toned voice of divine inspiration. God is not borrowing the hand of John to write His manuscript. He is commanding both hand and brain, which He created, to transmit direct from the Fountain Head what He is pleased to make known among men. Other men before John had gone into heaven, but they tell us nothing of what they saw there. No glory flashes back from the open door through which Enoch and Elijah passed bodily into heaven. Paul is caught up there, whether in the body or out of the body, he cannot tell, and what he hears is not lawful for him to utter. With John all is different. What he sees and hears, he is to communicate to others in definite language supplied to him by the Holy Spirit. No human mind is working here. It is the Spirit of God giving utterance to His own thought.

John is in heaven, and looks back upon the earth to which the time of the harvest and vintage has come. God is supreme, and the last throes of the world's rebellion shall issue in the accomplishment of His predetermined purposes. John's mind, controlled by the Spirit, and no longer fettered by human limitation, is free to express the revelation of the Spirit. In the letters to the churches he has epitomized the history of the many centuries of Christian testimony, and now, with these centuries passed and Christian testimony ceased upon the earth, he will tell us what is to come "after these things," and will carry us on to the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 PET. 3:13).

Summoned through the open door of heaven he sees "a throne." That throne has been always there and always oc-

cupied. Of old, it was written: "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne" (Ps. 97:2).

The "clouds and darkness" are now pierced by the lightning flash in premonition of the storm about to burst upon the world. Man's day upon the earth is about to end, and the throne, so long wrapped in clouds and darkness, is now illumined that we may look upon Him who fills it. "Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne; and he that sat was like in appearance to a jasper and a sardine stone; and a rainbow was round about the throne in appearance like unto an emerald." These precious gems, flashing their light upon the rainbow-encircled throne, are designed to give us some conception of Him who fills it. The occupant of the throne is not Christ, and yet, as we shall see, only through Christ can the occupant of the throne be known. The throne is the throne of God, from whose face the veil of the past is gone, and who is now known as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." When our Lord ascended to heaven He "sat on the right hand of God" to remain until His enemies be made His footstool. Revelation has in view the time of this subjection of His enemies, and Christ, therefore, is not here seen upon the throne, but as having risen and left it for the execution of other purposes which effect the establishment of His Messianic kingdom. The Father has always been upon the throne and He remains upon it now. In the Psalms God is spoken of as "sitting upon the throne of his holiness." Both Micaiah and Isaiah tell us they saw "the Lord sitting on his throne," but neither one of these prophets has anything to say about His appearance. Throughout the Old Testament God is always spoken of as enthroned, but over all the veil hangs heavily. To Moses God said: "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Ex. 33:20). "Thou art a God that hidest thyself" was the common expression, and in the Psalms we read: "Thou coverest thyself with light as with a garment."

God is light, as the New Testament affirms, but the light serves as a covering for Him. Every additional revelation given of God makes Him the more mysterious. This is the manner of the Old Testament speech. God, though known, is ever in the dark. The light that breaks from Him becomes the mantle that hides Him.

The language of the New Testament is entirely different from this. The disciple says: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (JOHN 14:8-9). Manifestly there was in Christ a revelation of the Father such as is nowhere found in the Old Testament Scriptures. In the epistle to the Colossians Paul declares that Christ is "the image of the invisible God." Through Christ alone the Father can be known. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (JOHN 14:6). In the Gospel of John there is an expression of similar import: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (JOHN 1:18). In Christ there is given a concept of the Father. This is manifest in the vision of the throne now before us. "He that sat was like in appearance to a jasper and a sardine stone." This surely is given for the purpose of identification. He is in *appearance* like these two gems. There is perhaps no absolute certainty as to what is meant by the "jasper" and "sardine stone," but the most probable suggestion is that they represent the diamond and the carnelian. The white light of the diamond, mingled with the red hues of the carnelian, flashes from the throne and characterizes Him who sits upon it. He is "like in appearance" to the coalescent hues of these two precious gems.

"God is light" (1 JOHN 1:5). Light itself is triune, and the primary colors are blue, yellow, and red. They are respectively the light-bearing, heat-giving, and actinic rays, which combine in the one white beam of light. God is triune;

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and the light testifies to this. In the red, or life-giving ray, there is a suggestion of Christ, through whom eternal life is made possible for us; in the actinic, or chemical ray, there is a suggestion of the Holy Spirit, through whom all changes are wrought; the blue, or light-bearing ray, speaks to us of the Father. But, as we have seen before, the Father can be known only through the Son. The light of the diamond is glorified by the red hues of the carnelian. God, the Father, is seen through Christ. Only as we know Him, can we know the Father, and only as we have seen Him, can we see the Father. Before the Father's throne John stands, and the glory of Him who fills it is revealed through the incarnation of His beloved Son.

The throne is surrounded by a rainbow in appearance like an emerald. The bow as we see it in the storm cloud, however gorgeous, is broken by the line of the horizon, but here the bow encircles the throne with the colors of the spectrum blended into a glorious green. The rainbow was God's pledge to Noah that the earth should never again be destroyed by a flood. "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth." (GEN. 9: 12-17).

Here, in the book of Revelation, where the black clouds are gathering for God's last judgment upon the earth, the bow

is seen. God has not forgotten His covenant. The overshadowing cloud is not for the destruction of the earth, but for its purification. The day of judgment has come, but *the bow is in the cloud.* Through the descending rain the light breaks into its component parts, and flings its glory back upon the storm cloud. Judgment is about to overtake the earth, but the Glory of God shines out in the storm. This is no mere display of the glory of light as we see it in the blended colors of the spectrum. The light is of emerald only, and this speaks of refreshing and fruitfulness and restoration and blessing for the earth. God has another covenant than the one He made with Noah. He has a covenant with Christ, and He is about to redeem it. This covenant has respect to the earth with Christ's throne there, and Israel the center of blessing for all. No horizon breaks or mars the sign of this covenant. The bow *encircles* the throne. The pledges of God, to the last item, are to be kept. The whole power of the throne is to be set in motion for the fulfillment of the promises made to Israel, and now to be redeemed through Christ. God, the Father, is upon the throne, and He is there, as Christ has made Him known to us. He shall accomplish what was in His heart from the beginning, and the whole earth shall be full of His glory.

This central throne of God is surrounded by other thrones. John says, four and twenty: "And upon the thrones, four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and upon their heads golden crowns." The white robes and golden crowns reveal clearly that this company comprises a royal priesthood. It is made up of *elders.* Elders in Israel were not only representatives of the people, but judges of them, and therefore God's representatives in passing judgment upon the people. They were identified with God in the exercise of judgment. The four and twenty elders now before us in connection with God's throne are also enthroned, and identified with Him in the judgment about to be executed upon the earth. Their number speaks plainly of the twenty-four priestly courses

in Israel, and, in the new song they sing, they proclaim themselves "kings and priests," and are enthroned for mediatorial reign over, or in connection with, the earth. There ought to be very little question as to the identification of these crowned elders. They constitute the united royal priesthood predicted alike of Israel and the Church. They are seen here in one company redeemed and *glorified*.

The prophet Daniel has a vision of the time when the Son of man comes to take His kingdom, and in that vision thrones are set, but they are without occupants. As a matter of fact, in Daniel's day, the thrones though established were vacant. Now we are come to the time of the accomplishment of Daniel's prophecy, and the thrones are filled. Commentators in general (and because they can give no clear account of the manner in which these thrones have come to be occupied), look upon this as a prophetic picture of the redeemed, gathered before God in some far distant time, which they vaguely speak of as the "end of the world." But we are not yet come to the end of the world. The earth remains, and divine judgment is about to be executed upon it. The thrones hitherto empty are now filled, and, manifestly enough, by redeemed and glorified people. It is natural and legitimate to ask the question, When were these people glorified and enthroned? No answer to this is given here, but Scripture elsewhere gives it in the plainest language possible. The Church—and twelve at least of these twenty-four elders, crowned and glorified, represent the Church—is made up of individual members who together constitute the body of Christ. When Christ appears some of these individuals shall be living, and the rest numbered with the dead. "The dead," as the apostle tells us, "sleep in Jesus," to be aroused from their slumber when Jesus comes. Among the Thessalonians there were many who were sorrowing for the dead. In his epistle to them Paul takes up the whole question and tells us plainly what will be the result, both to the living and the dead, of Christ's return. "Now we would not have you ignorant,

brethren, concerning those that are fallen asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as the rest also who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also those who have been laid asleep by Jesus, will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are living, who are left unto the coming of the Lord, are in no way to anticipate those who have fallen asleep. Because the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught away together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words" (1 THESS. 4:13-18 Gr.). This statement of the apostle is clear enough, and, taken together with what he has written in the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, gives us a perfectly intelligible account of what will take place at the appearing of the Lord. In Corinthians the resurrection of Christ is spoken of as "the first-fruits of those that are fallen asleep." This is certainly not the first-fruits of all the dead, but of such as are said to have "fallen asleep." In Thessalonians these are spoken of as having "fallen asleep *in Jesus.*" The impenitent do not fall asleep in Jesus; they die.

Christ came out of the grave alone. There was no general resurrection of the saints with Him, but "graves were opened and many bodies of the saints that slept arose, and came out of the graves *after his resurrection,* and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (MATT. 27:52-53). These, together with Christ, were the "wave-sheaf" or *first-fruits* of the harvest to be gathered when Christ comes. This, as applied to believers in Christ, is what gives character to resurrection. It is a discriminate resurrection, as Paul speaks of it in Philippians, "out from among the dead," and to which resurrection he earnestly desired to attain. The prevailing opinion of a simultaneous resurrection of the just and the

unjust cannot be sustained by Scripture. There is a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust, but not at the same time. There is a long interval between these resurrections. Paul says: "As in Adam all die, so also shall all in Christ be made alive. But each in his own rank; Christ the first-fruits; afterwards, they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 COR. 15:22-23. Gr.). Manifestly, he is not speaking of all men, but of "all in Christ." All men are alike "in Adam," and death reigns universally over all. In the resurrection here spoken of, not *all in Adam*, but *all in Christ* are to be made alive. The resurrection of all men is not denied. Paul is speaking of the *order* of resurrection; "each in his own rank; Christ the first-fruits; afterwards, they that are Christ's at his coming." He says nothing about the resurrection of the wicked; of them he is not speaking, but of the saints alone. The wicked *are* to be raised. We have abundant assurance of this in other Scriptures, and the time of their resurrection is fully made known. In the Corinthian chapter there is no reference whatever to the wicked, and the words of the apostle have no application to any general resurrection of the dead. In its closing verses we have a statement in confirmation of the one found in Thessalonians: "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is of believers alone he is here speaking. The wicked are not under consideration. The trumpet in Israel was for the

convocation of the people, but here it summons believers, whether living or dead, to meet Christ. It comes suddenly; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. The trumpet sounds; the dead are raised incorruptible; and the living are changed. "This corruptible"—he is speaking of the dead—"must put on incorruption." "This mortal"—he is speaking of the living—"must put on immortality." This is precisely the same as in Thessalonians. The dead in Christ, for whom the saints were sorrowing, were not to be left without participation in the glory to be ushered in by Christ's appearing. Christ had risen, and all that were to share in His glory were to be raised too. But there was to be perfect order in resurrection: Christ first; "afterwards, they that are Christ's at his coming." The wicked are not raised when Christ appears to receive His Church. The time of the resurrection of the wicked will come before us in its proper place. We are considering here simply the resurrection of the just. The Scriptural account of this resurrection shows us how, and when, and by whom, the four and twenty thrones around the central throne were filled. At any time,—we are not warranted in putting it off a moment,—Christ may appear; and when He appears, the trumpet shall sound, rousing those who have fallen asleep in Him, and we who are alive and remain shall be instantly changed, and, together with the saints of this resurrection, be caught up "to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord." Christ does not appear until the last member of the Church has been added to it. The redeemed, constituting the body of Christ, are made up of a definite number. In the last roll-call each shall answer to his name, and no others will be added to this company. Until the last member has been received into it, the body of Christ is not complete, nor the history of the Church ended. He descends from heaven "with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." He does not come to earth. Scripture is decisive as to this. At the sound of His voice, the dead in Christ are raised, and we who are alive are

changed and caught up together with them to meet Him in the air. Such is the plain language of Scripture, and this permits of no simultaneous resurrection of the just and the unjust. In our introductory study we have already seen that the resurrection of the dead saints and the transformation of the living ones does not bring the world to an end. Jewish history was broken off by the rejection of Christ, and many prophetic promises were left unfulfilled. Judicial blindness fell upon Israel, to continue until the fullness of the Gentiles come in. Israel, as a nation, was set aside because of the rejection of their Messiah.

The kingdom which Christ came to establish takes another, and as we have seen, a "mystery" form. Christ, the true "nobleman" of the parable, has gone "into a far country to get a kingdom and to return." When He returns He will have an accounting from those intrusted with His interests while He was away. These trustees constitute the Church. When Christ comes, they shall be summoned into His presence to render an account of the deeds done in the body. This does not bring the world to an end. It removes the Church from the earth, and clears the way for God to take up the broken history of Israel, and carry it on to its final issue.

We have also seen that there must be a lapse between the sixty-ninth week and the last week in Daniel's prophecy. At the end of the sixty-ninth week the Messiah is cut off, and the line of Jewish history broken. The "times of the Gentiles" begin, and run on until the Church has finished her history, and is summoned out of the world to meet her Lord. After this, Jewish history is again taken up, and the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy runs its course. At the end of this seventieth week the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven to take the kingdom for which He has so long waited. He shall be manifested in glory, and the Church also shall be manifested with Him.

In the book of Revelation nothing is said about the removal of the Church. There is a brief but inspired epitome

of Church history, and then John, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is carried through the open door into heaven, and from that viewpoint he looks upon the earth after the Church has been removed from it. Twelve, at least, of the four and twenty elders who fill the thrones around the central throne represent the redeemed and glorified Church. The history of her formation on earth is over: God takes up once more the broken thread of Jewish history. This is the time of the restoration of Israel, and the time of final blessing for the earth. Some find it difficult to conceive of an interval between the time of Christ's appearing for the Church, and His coming in the clouds of heaven to receive the kingdom. There would be no confusion about this, if we would only keep clearly in mind the distinction, so consistently maintained in Scripture, between Israel and the Church. The Church, in her divine constitution and destiny, is not known at all, except typically, in the Old Testament. She is the wild olive that was grafted into the good olive tree after the natural branches had been broken off. When the Church is completed and taken from the earth, God returns to Israel's history and finishes it. This is accomplished in the interval of time between the coming of Christ *for* the Church and His return *with* her in the clouds of heaven to inaugurate the kingdom.

This interval, in accordance with the view already taken of Daniel's prophecy, covers a period of seven years. During this final week of seven years the Jews are restored to divine favor, and prepared, through the great tribulation which overtakes them, to acknowledge and receive the Messiah when He comes to set up the kingdom. After its third chapter the book of Revelation is almost exclusively related to this period of Jewish restoration. If the period, in contrast with the long centuries of Christian history, seems to be short, we must bear in mind that these years are not isolated, but connect themselves with the history interrupted by the crucifixion of Christ. Moreover, this period is the time of divine judgment upon the earth, and in the mercy of God is short; indeed

shortness is to be the characteristic of the awful period, for Jesus says: "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (MATT. 24:22).

Antichrist, heading world-empire, is found oppressing Israel, and in revolt against God. This is the solemn sign which heralds and ushers in the day of the Lord. It is the period that ends in the great tribulation spoken of by Christ in His prophecy on the Mount of Olives: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (MATT. 24:29-30). The suffering Messiah is about to manifest Himself as the Conqueror in behalf of Israel and the earth.

This is the time of the redemption of the promises made to the twelve: "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (MATT. 19:28). Christ, when He uttered this promise, was speaking of the Millennial kingdom and of the literal reign of the twelve, as Jewish representatives, with Him. The twelve were still treated as in connection with Israel. Christ was not yet rejected, but was still offering Himself to the Jewish nation. The Church was not yet formed and the disciples were looked upon as connected with the nation and, as such, the promise was made to them.

The twenty-four thrones, or double twelve, of John's vision seem to indicate two governing bodies. There is a passage in Isaiah that has reference to God's judgment upon the earth, and suggests a possible reason for this double company. "It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall

punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth" (Is. 24:21). The "host of the high ones" undoubtedly refers to Satan and his angels, while the "kings of the earth" are literally such. We may infer from this that in the coming kingdom of Christ there will be a double sphere of rule; one heavenly, and the other earthly. The Church shall reign with Christ in the heavenly, and Israel shall reign with Him in the earthly sphere. In the twenty-four elders the double company is seen as one. The unchangeable purpose of God is, that if we suffer with Christ, "we shall also reign with him." The Church, together with Israel; and both, together with Christ, shall smite the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth, and, in presence of His prostrate foes, Christ, having vindicated His right to the title, shall be crowned the "King of kings and Lord of lords."

XI

THE CHERUBIM

And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and voices and thunders; and [there were] seven lamps of fire, burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. And before the throne [there was] as a sea of glass like crystal; and in the midst of the throne and around the throne, four living beings, full of eyes, before and behind: and the first living being was like a lion, and the second living being like an ox, and the third living being had the face as of a man, and the fourth living being was like a flying eagle. And the four living beings, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes around and within: and they cease not day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come. And when the living beings shall give glory and honor and thanksgiving to him that sitteth upon the throne, who liveth unto the ages of ages, the twenty-four elders shall fall down before him that sitteth upon the throne, and worship him that liveth unto the ages of ages; and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy will they were, and were created.—(Chapter 4: 5-11.)

THE eye of the seer is now turned from the four and twenty thrones to the central throne from which proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. The character of the throne is manifestly one of judgment, but the encircling bow bears witness to the fact that God remembers and will keep His covenant.

In the ninety-sixth Psalm there is a prophecy of the coming of Jehovah. He is greeted with a song by those who realize that His coming means the full redemption of the world. Though He accomplish this through judgment, yet when judgment is passed, the earth is filled with the knowledge of His glory. The nations of the earth are summoned, that they may worship Him in the majesty of holiness. He is to judge the

people with equity, and the throne is characterized as one of absolute righteousness. All nature joins in the pæan of welcome; the waves of the sea are lifted up in gladness; the trees of the wood exult, for God is come to judge the world: and heaven and nature sing. In the Psalm following the same theme is further expanded. Jehovah is supreme over all the earth, and though clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne. The nations of the world, found in opposition to Him, are to be subdued. The earth trembles; the lightning flashes; the thunder rolls. They portend impending judgment about to overtake the earth. But this can alone deliver it from the bondage of corruption, and bring it into the liberty of the sons of God. Such is the character of the throne we now are called upon to contemplate, and this is testified to by the lightnings and voices and thunders that proceed from it.

In the present dispensation God's throne is called "a throne of grace," accessible to all, and to it we may come boldly, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need. When the day of grace is passed, clouds and darkness will again as of old cover the throne, testifying to the unapproachable holiness of Him who occupies it. Voices—to be understood surely—will interpret the thunder and lightnings which precede the storm about to burst upon the world. The seven lamps, burning before the throne, are "the seven spirits of God." As in the beginning, so here, "the seven spirits" speak of the sevenfold energy of the Holy Spirit, who acts in perfect accord with Him who occupies the throne. They are spoken of as "seven lamps of fire." They constitute the searchlight of an omniscient God from which no escape shall be possible. These lamps of fire will throw light upon the ways of God, and reveal the fact that "He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth" (Is. 11: 3-4). The throne of God is thus manifested: and is estab-

lished in power for the repeal of the curse, and for the revelation of His glory among men. The Holy Spirit, symbolized by these lamps of fire, illumines all. If darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people, yet all heaven is ablaze with the glory of God, and that glory is about to shine upon the earth and banish the darkness from it.

Before the throne there is a sea of glass which has the appearance of crystal. In the temple of Solomon there was a "sea" of water wherein the priests washed their hands and feet before they went in to minister in the sanctuary. For the redeemed such purification is forever accomplished, and the waters, no longer needed for cleansing, are become a "crystal" sea. Calmness and purity succeed the trouble and defilement of the earth. The sea, with its troubled waters, is the emblem of unrest. It is the Scriptural symbol of the wicked, who "are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Is. 57:20). In heaven the restless waves of the sea are forever stilled. The sole reminder of it shall be this "sea of glass," clear as crystal, before the throne of God. The storms are over, the waves are quiet, and nothing disturbs the crystal sea. The lightnings flash and the thunders roll, and these bear witness to the impending storm, yet "the seven lamps" burn steadily before the throne, and the elders, in calmness and purity, abide upon their thrones in peace. Whatever may befall the earth, the saints of God are at rest.

"In the midst of the throne, and around the throne," John sees: "Four living beings, full of eyes, before and behind: and the first living being was like a lion, and the second living being like an ox, and the third living being had the face as of a man, and the fourth living being was like a flying eagle. And the four living beings, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes around and within: and they cease not day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come."

Instead of "beasts," as in the common version, we adopt

the better translation, "living beings." It is conceded, by commentators in general, that these living beings are identical with the cherubim of the Old Testament. These were regarded as mere symbols, but what they symbolized was left to the imagination of men, and various theories that could not be established by any Scriptural evidence were advanced. That they represented living beings who had been redeemed, was an inference drawn from the text of the song (Chapter 5:8-10) in which they join with the elders. A correction in the text, admitted by all scholars, does not justify such an inference, and the common idea now prevails that these living beings are *impersonal,* and represent the fundamental forms of divine government. The ideal forms of these glorious beings are undoubtedly symbolic, but surely not merely of impersonal agents in connection with the administration of the government of God. They take part in the ascriptions of praise to God; they are invested with power and endowed with wisdom; they officiate at the opening of the four seals and summon with voices of thunder the instruments of judgment. Their number, four, may indicate some special relationship to the realms of nature for which this number is the Scriptural symbol. They belong to the order of the cherubim, and, as such, are executors of divine government. Whatever other characteristics may be theirs, Scripture constantly puts them in intimate connection with the execution of divine purposes. When the gates of paradise were closed upon Adam, the cherubim were placed at the east end of the garden. They *tabernacled* there—that is the word used—and were there in connection with the administration of divine judgment. Their presence was relative not only to judgment, but also to the redemption of a fallen creature.

The fullest account of these glorious beings is found in the book of Ezekiel. As the prophet stands on the bank of the river, the heavens are opened, and he has "visions of God." A "whirlwind" comes out of the north driving a great cloud before it in which the prophet sees "a fire infolding itself."

When the cloud draws near he is able to distinguish the forms of glorious beings. Coming out of the midst of the self-infolding fire are "four living creatures," each standing beside an enormous wheel. Above the heads of these living creatures there was the likeness of a firmament of crystal, and above the firmament a throne as the appearance of a sapphire stone.

This was a picture of the chariot of Jehovah, borne by the cherubim, and coming in judgment. Each of the cherubim had four faces and four sides corresponding to the four faces, and each had six wings. They were full of eyes before, and behind, as were also the rings of the wheels beside which they stood. They possessed piercing and omniscient intelligence. The wheels themselves were of peculiar construction, "a wheel, as within a wheel," that is, one passing transversely through the center of another, so that when they turned, in whatsoever direction, the turning was always directly before one of the four faces of the cherubim. They could move with equal ease and speed in any one of the four directions to which the faces were turned. The spirit of life, or rather of the living creature that stood beside them, was in the wheels, and "whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went." Wherever the Spirit of God willed to go, thither would the chariot of the cherubim go, and return with the speed of lightning.

In the eighteenth Psalm, where Jehovah is spoken of as acting in judgment, we read: "He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place: his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies" (Ps. 18:9-11). Here, as elsewhere, the cherubim are connected with the divine government. They are the coursers of His chariot; and the "wings of the wind" on which He is borne, the figures of swift and furious judgment, combine the speed and power of the storm-blast. The cherubim seen by Ezekiel are, by common consent, the same as seen by John,

though John gives a somewhat different description of them, which may possibly be due to the different circumstances in which they are placed.

Each of the living creatures has a different face: the first, of a lion; the second, of an ox; the third, of a man, and the fourth, of an eagle. In Ezekiel all the four faces are given to each of the cherubim. They are seen bearing a chariot of Jehovah, and their faces are turned to the four quarters whither the wheels could instantly turn as they were moved by the spirit within them. In Revelation they are "in the midst, and round about the throne," where no movement is necessary, and this may explain the absence of the wheels in John's description. The expression, "living beings," is a literal translation of the word used by Ezekiel.

The six-winged seraphim seen in the vision of Isaiah are considered by many to be the same as the cherubim. They stand in the same position, "before the throne," and utter the same cry: "Holy, holy, holy!" The different name, however, indicates a difference in function. The cherubim take "the coals of fire" to execute the wrath of God, while one of the seraphim, with a burning coal from the altar, purges the lips of the prophet. (Is. 6:1-7.)

These glorious beings are intimately connected with the divine government. They are not angels, for in the book we are reading they are distinguished from them. John hears: "The voice of many angels round the throne and the living beings and the elders."

Figures of the cherubim were woven into the ten tri-colored curtains of the tabernacle. They were also wrought of pure gold, and attached to each end of the mercy-seat in the holy of holies, which was God's sanctuary-throne in Israel. In His relation to Israel, God is spoken of as "dwelling between the cherubim." Connected here, as elsewhere, with the display of judicial authority, they give expression to the executive righteousness of His throne. Their faces are indicative of fundamental principles in the divine government. The lion,

the ox, the man, and the eagle speak, in their order, of royal power, patient service, intelligence, and inscrutability. Wherever they appear in Scripture, whether in the garden of Eden, or over the mercy-seat, or before the throne, they retain their peculiar form. They stand before God not only as the representatives of the highest forms of creation, but they are also connected with Him in His government of creation. The character of their administration of government is clearly manifest. First, the lion, "the strongest among beasts, and turneth not away from any," testifies of power without which no government could be sustained. But the government of God is not characterized alone by omnipotence, and the face of the second "living being" gives us quite another feature. In the ox there is strength, as well as in the lion, but the strength of the ox is devoted to the service of man. God's government is over man, and in behalf of man, and in the third living creature we have "the face of a man." But God's way with man is not easily read, as the apostle declares: "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" These "unsearchable ways" are indicated by the face of the "flying eagle."

The cherubim are not only the representatives of creation, which is under the complete control of God, but they are also associated with Him as executors of judgment upon it. They are created intelligences, acting in perfect harmony with the general character of God's government, and for the accomplishment of His purposes. God intends, and has intended from the beginning, to bring all things in subjection to His Son. The cherubim are identified with this intention, and they apply their energies to the execution of it. The eternal decree is that Christ must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet; then the end comes, and He delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father.

Their number, four, is the usual Scriptural number for the earth with its "four corners" and its "four winds of heaven." In the four Gospels Christ is represented in relation to the earth.

It is natural enough to associate in some way the faces of the cherubim with these Gospels, and such, indeed, has been the unvarying thought from the early Fathers to the present time. In the chapter under consideration the four face-forms of the cherubim are in striking correspondence with the exact order of the four Gospels as they are placed in the Bible. The "lion," which is the king of beasts, testifies to the royal character of Matthew's Gospel in which Jesus is seen as King throughout. In the "ox," the patient servant in the interest of men, we see what is distinctive of Mark's Gospel where Jesus moves throughout, as the servant of Jehovah, ministering to the needs of men. In Luke we have the Gospel of manhood, testified to by the third form of the cherubim which has the "face of a man." In John we have the deity of Christ, characterized by the soaring "eagle," the bird of heaven.

Figures of the cherubim were embroidered upon the veil before the holy of holies, and this veil, according to the apostle, represents "the flesh of Christ." The incarnation of Christ limits for them the field of action. They do not act apart from Him. They represent, in the different forms presented to us, the varied features of the divine government derived from Him through whom all things are to be made subject to the central throne of God. Such are the "living creatures" seen about the throne in the hour of final judgment. They are "the great intelligences that range above our mortal state"; higher than angels or archangels, and connected with the throne of God in the administration of His government. Their six wings testify to their unresting activity, and the eyes, around them and within them, testify to the omniscience by which all things are searched out. They rest not, nor do they cease day and night to cry: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come." The period through which they cry, "day and night," has respect to the earth, for there is "no night in heaven." They are the official executors of judgment upon the earth where day and night succeed each other still, and where,

whether it be day or night, they testify to the holiness of Almighty God who reigns in unsearchable glory over them.

The cherubim are "living beings," ambassadors extraordinary of God, and not merely symbols of impersonal forms of government. They are clothed with glory and honor, and endowed with the highest order of intelligence; they have access to the immediate presence of God; they are attendants of the throne, and take part in the administration of government; they are superhuman, but *created* beings, holding the most exalted position, and in possession of the most exalted privileges.

There is a passage in Ezekiel that seems to indicate that Satan, in his original state, belonged to this high order of created intelligences. It reads as follows: "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God: Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou wast in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, the topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was in thee; in the day that thou wast created they were prepared. Thou wast the anointed cherub that covereth: and I set thee, so that thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee. By the multitude of thy traffic they filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore have I cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God; and I have destroyed thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I have cast thee to the ground, I have laid thee before kings, that they may behold thee. By the multitude of thine iniquities, in the unrighteousness of thy traffic,

thou hast profaned thy sanctuaries; therefore have I brought forth a fire from the midst of thee, it hath devoured thee, and I have turned thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the peoples shall be astonished at thee: thou art become a terror, and thou shalt never be any more" (EZEK. 28: 11-19. R.V.).

This lamentation over the king of Tyre has troubled expositors, and been the subject of varied interpretation. That these words could possibly apply to any literal king of Tyre, or to any idealized monarchy, cannot be affirmed without imputing an unwarranted exaggeration to Scriptural language. The Bible is the Word of God, and contains no hyperboles such as we find in the writings of men. The truth revealed may be deeper than the sounding of our plummet, but we gain nothing by refusing to give words the full force of their meaning. The terms of this lamentation can, by no possibility, be applied in full force to any king of Tyre, or to any other *human* being. The statement that "the king of Tyre was in Eden, the garden of God," carries with it the statement that the garden of Eden was in existence during the reign of some Tyrian king. This "king of Tyre" spoken of in the lamentation is also called "the anointed cherub that covereth," and this expression connects plainly enough with the cherubic figures of beaten gold that overshadowed, or "covered," the mercy-seat. What application this could have to any one of the historical Tyrian kings, or to any other earthly potentate, is beyond conception.

Again the word is: "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee." This could not be affirmed, except in flat contradiction to Scripture, of any ordinary human being since the Fall. Here is a *superhuman* being, or else we must give up the plain meaning of the language. His being called "the anointed cherub" plainly identifies him with the order of the cherubim. He does not keep his original state, but, being lifted up because of his beauty, he corrupted his wisdom by reason of his brightness, and so brought ruin upon himself,

and the realm over which he had jurisdiction. We are told by the apostle Paul that *pride* was the efficient cause of the condemnation of Satan. (2 TIM. 3:6, Gr.). Is it not possible, that in this lamentation over the king of Tyre we have a brief account of the original jurisdiction and fall of Satan? Satan, though his personality be denied by man, is always recognized and treated as a person in the pages of Scripture. He is a fallen being, and it is legitimate to find out what we can of his original state, and discover the cause and consequence of his rebellion against God. If he belong to the order of the cherubim, he would not in his first estate differ in character, intelligence, or power from them. *Any* light upon this solemn subject that Scripture may furnish should be welcomed.

The view about to be presented has enough Scriptural warrant to make it worthy of careful and earnest thought. It must be universally conceded that the world, as it now exists, is not the world that came originally from the hands of God. What the world was prior to the time when by "one man's disobedience sin entered into it" can, of course, only be conjectured. The world has taken its present character from the sin which has entered into it. Sin, we are told, "entered into the world by one man," but back of that man stands the weird shadow of another being who, whatever theory of creation we hold, was in existence before Adam. Even the serpent, the instrument used for the seduction of man, was in existence before him. There is in fact sufficient evidence to prove that in the first chapter of Genesis we have an account of the restoration of a ruined world, rather than the record of the successive periods of an original creation. Geology will not allow that the original creation was the work of six days; neither will Scripture. These six days, without a strain upon the words that they will not bear, cannot, to meet the necessities of geology, be stretched into long periods of time. With all deference to the valuable findings of archæological research we must nevertheless insist that the Bible is sufficient in itself

for its interpretation. It interprets man, not man it, and it gives a complete record of the creation and constitution of him and his dwelling place.

The *original* creation, as it came from the hands of God, was perfect, and none but a skeptic would venture to deny it. The "morning stars sang together" as they celebrated the work of His creative power. We may well believe that angels and archangels and cherubim and seraphim were in existence long before this weary world, burdened with its load of sin, went careening through space. Pusey, in the preface of his *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet,* argues, from an exegetical standpoint, for the existence of a preadamite earth. He also gives us the following suggestive quotation from Kurtz: "Between the first and second, and between the second and third, verses of the Biblical history of creation, revelation leaves two great white pages, on which human science may write what it will, in order to fill up the blanks of natural history, which revelation omitted itself to supply, as not being its office. Of each of these 'cartes blanches' revelation has only given a superscription, a summary table of contents. The first runs, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' How this was, how long it lasted, what followed thereon, what evolutions and revolutions took place, down to that state of things which v. 2 describes, it says nothing. Let human science fill up the void, if it can. The second 'carte blanche' has the summary inscription, 'the earth was void and waste, and the Spirit of God was brooding on the face of the waters.' What influences the Spirit of God, Which brooded over the waters, had upon them, what operations and formations It called forth in them, revelation says not. Revelation has, in the superscription of the two 'cartes blanches,' laid an ever firm and immovable foundation, which leaves none for Atheism or Pantheism. Experience, combination, and speculation, investigation, and philosophy of nature or of religion, and Theology may try to build further on this foundation. But no other foundation shall anyone lay than that which is here laid."

It is not difficult to conceive of a preëxisting earth, perfect in form and beauty, and peopled with men and women in the full enjoyment of all that God in His grace might give them, and, in view of what we have learned of the cherubim, it is not difficult to conceive that God may have conferred jurisdiction over such an original creation upon one of these exalted intelligences. This would account for the "anointed cherub" over whose fall the prophet laments. He, with his subordinate angels, endowed with power and wisdom, reigned in a paradise transcending in glory and beauty the garden of Eden where Adam and Eve were placed. Having revolted against God, he carried with him his subordinate angels, and the whole preadamite race of men and women. This evoked the judgment of God. The deluge came, and "darkness was upon the face of the deep."

The *first* verse of Genesis speaks of God's original creation: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The succeeding verses tell us of the restoration of the ruin brought about by the rebellion of him that had original jurisdiction over the earth.

The six days' work of restoration are crowned by man "formed from the dust of the ground." God does not annihilate what He creates. He redeems the penitent, and judges all that remain in rebellion against Him. The Bible does not speak of the redemption of Satan, nor of his angels, nor of the fallen inhabitants of a preadamite world lured away from God by Satan. Mystery there may be in this, but we must remember: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (DEUT. 29:29). God has not made known everything which lies back of the awful realities of life. Redemption of fallen man, whatever be the destiny of those who sin beyond the reach of sovereign grace, is, to the praise of His glory, known.

Satan is in existence, and apparently in hopeless rebellion against God. Fallen angels are also in existence. So, too, are

demons, and these demons may be the disembodied spirits of a preadamite world. Evil there is, and of enormous magnitude, and denial of it is no escape from it. Satan is the "god of this age," and the "prince of this world." His title is not disputed in Scripture, and, whether we understand it or not, we can believe that Christ's work of atonement was of such a character as righteously to deprive Satan of all title, and to meet every claim of divine justice. By a marvel of divine wisdom, the world has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Jesus said: "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (JOHN 10:17-18). No wonder that "there was a division again among the Jews on account of these words." God has power to give up His life and recover it again. This is the mystery of all mysteries. It carries us into transcendental regions whose boundaries lie beyond the reach of the human intellect. The life surrendered is recovered in resurrection. The fruit of this glorious work abides. Through death He brought to nought "him who had the power of death, that is the devil; and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The shadow of death flees before the Light of Life descending into it; the price is paid; the blood is shed, and a fallen world redeemed. No wonder, when the "living creatures," the unfallen cherubim, "give glory and honor and thanksgiving to him that sitteth upon the throne, who liveth unto the ages of ages, the twenty-four elders shall fall down before him that sitteth upon the throne, and worship him that liveth unto the ages of ages; and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy will they were, and were created."

The redemption of creation is here celebrated, and in the recital of that redemption the cherubim unite with the elders. The wrong, wrought by the fall of one bright spirit from

among them, has been made right. They, with the redeemed of earth, join in the grand recitative of a redeemed creation. In anticipation of that promised hour, we, too, believing in the supremacy of God, and in the final victory of good over evil, give expression to our own joy in the one glad word, Hallelujah!

XII

THE LION OF JUDAH

And I saw on the right hand of him that sat upon the throne a book written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no one was able, either in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth, to open the book, or to look thereon. And I wept much because no one was found worthy to open the book, nor to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion which is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed, to open the book and the seven seals thereof. And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living beings, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as if it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God [that are] sent into all the earth; and he came and took it out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he took the book, the four living beings and the four and twenty elders fell before the Lamb, having each one a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast purchased to God by thy blood [men] of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and made them to our God kings and priests, and they shall reign over the earth. And I saw, and I heard the voice of many angels round the throne and the living beings and the elders, and their number was ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in the heaven and upon earth and under the earth and upon the sea, even all things in them, heard I saying, To him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb be blessing, and honor, and glory, and might, unto the ages of ages. And the four living beings said, Amen; and the elders fell down and worshiped.—(Chapter 5.)

THE fourth chapter brought to our attention the throne of God, and the worship of the cherubim. The revolt from the ranks of the cherubim had wrought ruin upon the original creation, but now the time of restoration has come, and the unfallen cherubim give glory to God. The rebellion against the government of God is

over. A fallen world has been restored, and, because this, too, is the fruit of redemption, the worship of the cherubim is joined in by the elders who cast their crowns before the throne.

Here in chapter five the Redeemer, in the perfection of His acquired glory, comes upon the scene, and His presence is greeted with a song. The song is the full-toned Oratorio of Redemption. The music of it fills heaven, and the echoes are borne on and on until they are heard in earth and hell. At first the Redeemer is not seen, but our attention is called to a book, hitherto unnoticed, sealed with seven seals and held in the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne. The book, being "sealed," no one, of course, can read until the seals are broken, and even then we may lack ability to understand what is written therein. A sealed book may be put into the hands both of a Greek professor and of a child, and both would be alike ignorant of the writing within it. Let the seal be broken, and if the book be written in Greek, the professor may understand it, but the child remains in ignorance. Whatever is written in the book before us cannot be known until the seals be broken, and when they are broken, our understanding of the writing will depend upon our ability to read it.

A part of Daniel's prophecy has reference to the final restoration of Israel. The seventieth week of his prophecy, as we have before seen, covers the period of that restoration. It was to be a time of great trouble for Israel "such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Daniel confesses his inability to understand the terms of the revelation, and he is instructed "to shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." He says: "I heard the man clothed in linen, which was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth forever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my lord, what shall be the issue of these things? And he

said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand: but they that be wise shall understand" (DAN. 12:7-10, R. V.). The book of the divine counsel in reference to the restoration and blessing of Israel was "shut and sealed" by Daniel. It was to remain sealed, "till the time of the end," when the seals were to be broken, and the writing understood. In the seventh chapter is shown "An angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God," and judgment is stayed until the servants of God are sealed. The word "seal" is the same one used in reference to the book, and is also the Greek word which, in the Septuagint, translates the Hebrew word used by Daniel. The book, "shut and sealed" by Daniel, "is held in the right hand of him who sits upon the throne," and is now about to be opened, for the appointed time of "the end" is come. What is contained in the book will come before us as the seals are broken in succession. The book has been spoken of as the "title-deeds" of the Redeemer to His purchased possession, and the assertion is made, that "such a sealed book was put into the hands of the redeemer of an inheritance with the names of the witnesses written upon the back." Christ, most assuredly, has a rightful title to the inheritance upon which He is about to enter, and redemption implies an indisputable right of complete control over the estate for which the purchase price has been paid. This involves full recovery of all alienation, and deliverance of the inheritance from all the power of the enemy. Christ has paid the price and has the full title of a "Redeemer," and He is now about to put forth power to bring into complete subjection to Himself what is rightfully His own. The sealed book may be His "title-deeds," but there is more involved in it than this, for, when the seals are opened, there is neither proof of title, nor declaration of right, but stroke upon stroke of divine judgment, which issues in accomplished redemption. Power is thus manifested to make

the title good. Christ is alone competent to break the seals, and set in motion the successional judgments that, driving the enemy from the field, will put Him in possession of His purchased inheritance. No other than Christ could do this. Until He appears upon the scene, the book remains sealed. John says: "I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no one was able, either in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth, to open the book, or to look thereon."

Not a creature, in heaven, or earth, or hell, can be found worthy to *open* the book, or to *look thereon.* As a matter of fact no mere creature could furnish the price of redemption, and, by manifestation of power, drive the enemy from the field, and make his title to a lost world good. Mere man is without ability for this, and if there be no other resource, the book is sealed, and is sealed forever. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way," and by no self-help can we rescue ourselves from the ruin into which we are fallen. Redemption, if there be any, must come from another, and One there is, thank God, who can be to us a "Kinsman-Redeemer."

John weeps because no one responds to the challenge of the angel to open the book, but he is reassured by one of the elders who says to him: "Weep not: behold, the Lion which is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed, to open the book and the seven seals thereof." When John looks for the "Lion of Judah," he sees "a Lamb standing, as if it had been slain." Strangely enough, in these titles of the Redeemer, excepting "the Lamb slain," the commentators have found little or no meaning. There is no difficulty in understanding the meaning of the "*Lamb* slain," but is there no significance in the "Lion of Judah" and the "Root of David"?

The Church is no longer upon the earth, but is glorified and enthroned in heaven. Israel, however, is still upon the earth, and Christ is given the title that speaks of the renewal of relationship to them. Commentators in general ignore the "setting

aside" of Israel, and have made the Church sole heir to the promises that definitely belong to Israel: and this deprives these titles of their real significance. The restoration and blessing of Israel constitute a part of Christ's inheritance, and without this the full redemption is not accomplished. This is to be effected now. The seals of Daniel's book are to be broken, and the purposes of God in respect to Israel executed. The "Lion" and the "Lamb" are One, and had not Christ been the "Lamb," He could not now act as the "Lion." The *sacrifice* made possible the *Saviour,* and He now assumes power for the execution of the purposes made possible by His sacrifice. As "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," He comes to the front with power to execute the eternal purpose of the eternal God. He is clothed with power to vindicate His claim to the objects of His love.

Just before Jacob died, he blessed his sons in succession, saying: "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days" (GEN. 49:1). The blessing that falls from his lips is not for immediate fulfillment. His eyes, filled with the light of prophecy, look down through the long vista of the centuries, and he sees the glory flashing in the clouds of trouble that shall overshadow Israel in the last days. When he comes to Judah, he says: "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (GEN. 49:8-10). It is Christ who comes within the range of vision as the dying patriarch sees Judah assuming the "lion" character. The kingdom in Israel under David looked almost like the fulfillment of Jacob's prediction. But David himself was only a type of "Shiloh" to whom the gathering of the people should be. Therefore Christ is spoken

of, not only as the Lion of Judah, but also as the *Root* of *David.* David derived whatever significance he had from Christ. The kingdom under David was but a prophecy of the greater kingdom yet to be established in the hands of Christ. David's throne, so long in ruins, is to be lifted up, and Jacob's prophecy fulfilled by *Shiloh* when He comes. The national unbelief and rejection, which have so long hindered the fulfillment of promises to Israel, are now removed, and the "Lion of Judah" prevails to open the book. The sin of their unbelief, which prevented the execution of divine purposes, has been overcome by Christ, and He is about to establish them in the place of blessing made possible by the atonement. The path in which He has traveled to power is pointed out by John when he says: "I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living beings, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as if it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth."

The Lamb is a symbol of weakness, and this thought is further intensified by the words "as if it had been slain." He bears the marks of suffering; He has been in death, but is now alive out of it. Strength, however, in contrast with apparent weakness, is testified to by the "seven horns" and the "seven eyes." The path of suffering has brought Him to the place of power. By going down into death He has conquered death, and the sin of the world has been met by atonement. With His own blood He has made redemption possible, and now He is clothed with power to make the inheritance good. By His victory over death, as the "Lamb," He has acquired power which He can now display as the Lion. It was necessary for Him to be the one, before He could be the other.

The face of the first of the cherubim is the face of a "lion" which, as we have seen, gives the characteristic feature of the Gospel of Matthew. In this Gospel the royal character of Christ is everywhere manifest. He is born "King of the Jews" and is owned and worshiped as such by the Magi. The Jews of His time, and for centuries before had lived in

expectation of the coming of a King, who would overthrow their enemies, and reëstablish the broken-down throne of David. These expectations were justified by prophecies of the plainest character. Their hopes were centered in the Messiah, and when He came, He was to be recognized by signs that it would seem impossible for them to mistake. With such credentials, certifying His identity, Christ presented Himself to the Jewish nation as their King, and was by them rejected. He was slain, and the throne of David which he came to fill was left in the possession of Idumean usurpers. For this rejection the nation was sentenced to judicial blindness, and salvation, through faith in the rejected Saviour, was proclaimed to all the world. The Jews of the time did not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, and to this day, scattered among the nations of the earth under this sentence of judicial blindness, they are still waiting for the promised Deliverer. That deliverance will be effected for them after the history of the Church has run its course, and the saints have been removed to heaven. It shall be a time of trouble for them such as they have never yet known, but, at the end of it, Christ in power will appear for them. He will fulfill Old Testament pledges, and they shall "look upon him whom they have pierced," and find in the "Lamb slain" the One alone competent to act for them as the "Lion of Judah."

All this, if they had possessed the ability to read it, was clearly predicted for them in the history of Joseph. Joseph is first seen feeding the flock with his brethren, and is hated by them because he is the special object of his father's love. His dream of future supremacy over them intensified their hatred of him. He is sent by his father from the "vale of Hebron" ("the vale of communion") on a mission of love to these brethren, and as soon as he appears among them, they counsel together to slay him. Reuben prevents this, and Joseph, after being stripped of his coat, is cast into a pit, and his brethren "sat down to eat bread." While they are eating, a caravan of Ishmaelites appears, and, at the suggestion of Judah, Joseph is

taken from the pit and sold to the Ishmaelites for "twenty pieces of silver." He is by this transaction transferred to the hands of the Gentiles, and by them taken into Egypt, and the house of the Egyptian is blessed of Jehovah because of the presence of Joseph in it. Through false witness Joseph is sent to prison where all things come under his hand. He is on the path of humiliation that is to end for him in glory. Interpreting the doom of two prisoners there, he exhibits the ability that will serve him in the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream. Pharaoh dreamed he was standing by the river side: "And, behold, from the river came up seven kine, fine-looking and fat-fleshed; and they fed in the reed-grass. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them from the river, ill-looking and lean-fleshed, and stood by the [other] kine on the bank of the river. And the ill-looking and lean-fleshed kine ate up the seven kine that were fine-looking and fat-fleshed. And Pharaoh awoke. And he slept and dreamed a second time; and, lo, seven ears of corn springing up upon one stalk, plump and good. And, behold, seven ears of corn, thin and parched in the east wind, springing up after them; and the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, lo, it was a dream" (GEN. 41:2-7, Heb.). All the scribes and all the sages are brought in to interpret the dream, but none of them can do it, and then the chief cupbearer, whose destiny Joseph had foretold in prison, came forward unto Pharaoh and told him of Joseph. Joseph is brought in, and interprets Pharaoh's dream. The dream was a prophecy of "seven years of plenty" to be succeeded by "seven years of famine." The interpretation of the dream leads to the exaltation of Joseph, and he is set over all the land in a position, where, during the seven years of plenty, he can gather in his hand all the resources of Egypt needed in the succeeding years of famine. At the time of his exaltation he marries a Gentile wife, and is given a new name which means, as we have seen, not only "the revealer of secrets," but "the saviour of the world."

The seven years of plenty pass, and the years of famine follow. The famine extends to the land of Canaan, and Joseph's ten brethren come to Egypt to buy corn. They had not seen nor heard of Joseph since selling him to the Ishmaelites, and, for aught they knew, he was, as they had reported to his father, dead. We are familiar with what followed in Egypt. From the first Joseph knew his brethren, but they did not know him. Their necessities are temporarily relieved; Simeon is kept in prison, and they are warned not to come again unless they bring Benjamin with them. Famine again overtakes them and Judah prevails with his father to allow them to take Benjamin with them. Joseph gives them a feast, but remains unknown to them, and then sends them away with the silver cup in Benjamin's sack. They are pursued and captured and charged with theft. Joseph announces his intention to keep Benjamin as his slave; Judah offers himself as a hostage in his place, and then Joseph makes himself known, and they are reconciled.

The whole story is a picture of Christ, as rejected, but in the end in a place of power to minister to the need of His Jewish brethren. We see how all at last is made to turn upon Benjamin. No one person could be a full type of Christ, and Benjamin is brought in to supplement what is lacking in Joseph. "Benjamin" means "the son of my right hand," and he represents the Messiah of power, for whom the Jews have always been looking. But Benjamin, before he was called by his father the name which means "the son of my right hand," was named by his mother "Benoni," which means "the son of my sorrow." It was necessary for Christ to be the Sufferer before He could be the Conqueror. His path of humiliation was to end, as did that of Joseph's, in glory. Christ came on a mission of love to His brethren. As soon as He appeared in His active ministry they took counsel to slay Him. He was hated by them, not only because He was the special object of the Father's love, but because He was the Prophet of His own coming exaltation. His brethren did not slay Him, but sold Him at the suggestion of Judas Iscariot, and he, the

only Judæan among the disciples—all the others being Galileans—was in the loins of his father Judah when Joseph was sold. Thus was Christ transferred to the jurisdiction of the Gentiles, and under a false accusation went into a deeper, darker prison than that of Egypt. In this prison house of the dead all things came under the hand of Christ, and out of it He arose to be set in a place of exaltation where He is not only the "Revealer" of the secrets of the heart of God, but also the "Saviour of the world." In the meanwhile His brethren, the Jews according to the flesh, are under sentence of blindness, and know nothing of Him. They are not yet stricken by that famine that shall overtake the world, and that shall overwhelm them. The "seven years of plenty" have lengthened out into these long centuries of Christian history in which the grace and goodness of God have been so abundantly manifest; but the years of plenty shall come to an end, and the seven *literal* years of famine shall yet smite the world. Christ, known to us as the rejected One, is now exalted, and seated at the right hand of God, and He is the One whom Israel *does not know.* A Christ triumphant and reigning over the earth is the One for whom they have always looked; the Sufferer for whom they did not look, but who must precede the Conqueror, they have refused. Power does not lie with Benjamin for whom they are looking, but with Joseph whom they have refused. As a conquering Messiah, Christ has been prophesied to them, and as such He longs to display Himself in their behalf. This He cannot do without atonement for the sin that led them to their refusal of Him. For this they must be brought to repentance, and God sends them into an agony for their ideal Messiah that makes them ready to receive the true One. In the last great sorrow that shall overtake them this shall be accomplished. Before Him whom they do not know, they shall plead for the Benjamin who has been lost to them, and in the agony of that hour, while they are still pleading for the ideal conquering Messiah, the heavens shall suddenly open, and they shall be overwhelmed by a revelation of the Christ they refused. They

shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son. (ZECH. 12:10). The Conqueror and the Sufferer are One and the same blessed Person. "The Lion" that prevails to open the book is "the Lamb" that was slain.

"The Lamb that was slain" is the Lamb of sacrifice, but, differing from all other sacrificial lambs, He is alive from the dead. This declares Him to be "the Son of God" who has accomplished a work which sustains the righteousness of God's throne. That throne is henceforth characterized as "the throne of the Lamb," and throughout eternity will be known as "the throne of God and of the Lamb." Identified with God, He is also connected with them for whom He, as the Great High Priest, has passed through the heavens, and has changed the throne of "judgment" into a throne of "grace."

The chapter before this one represents creation brought back from its state of alienation, and this restoration is the theme of worship for the cherubim and the elders. Not only the world, in its material framework, has been alienated from God, but the creature also is involved in the same alienation. Man through the first Adam comes into the world a *fallen creature.* Redemption must be accomplished for him, and in that redemption the glory of God is fully manifested, and God Himself revealed to be a God of love. It was the *Son,* as we are assured in the epistle to the Hebrews, "who made by himself purification of sins" (HEB. 1:3, Gr.). By Himself He did this; no one shared with Him in the work of it. He stood, where no other could stand, and where He was obliged to stand in order to sustain the divine holiness. All that was here involved no human mind can grasp: there was something between Himself and God alone into which there could be no intrusion. In that work God was glorified in all His attributes, and sinful man made the object of a divine grace which reigns through *righteousness.* Christ went down into the inconceivable depths, and up out of them He has risen to fill the highest place in glory.

The blood upon the mercy-seat in the old dispensation was the typical expression of that atonement made by the blood of Christ. The mercy-seat was the throne of Jehovah, where He dwelt between the cherubim. It is spoken of literally as "the propitiatory," and the blood sprinkled there made propitiation for the soul. The propitiation is made for us through faith in His blood. The divine holiness has been sustained by the blood of atonement, and, in the salvation of sinners, the grace of God vindicated. God is omnipotent, but the exercise of His power is limited by His own perfections. The penalty for sin was required by the righteousness of God. If the penalty were an absolute necessity,—and we know it was, the nature of God requiring it,—God was not thereby limited in His ability to provide a way for meeting that penalty; and He displayed Himself in all the glory of His love, when Christ suffered according to the requirements of divine holiness, and took upon Himself that penalty which the righteousness of God had imposed. The twenty-second Psalm tells of the unequaled sufferings He endured in paying the penalty of man's sin, but in the midst of them He cries unto God: "Thou art holy."

It was because God was *holy* that the sufferings had to be endured. It was not merely my *sin* which held Him to the cross; it was God's *righteousness* which held Him there, if there was to be any escape for me. It was for me and for sinful men, Jesus endured all the agonies of such a death as no other than He could endure, and even in the midst of those sufferings He is heard, saying: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." Jesus, risen from the dead, said to Mary: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and unto my God, and your God" (JOHN 20: 17).

Thus the Saviour identifies Himself with them for whom He has shed His blood, and gathers around Him a congregation, in the midst of which He can sing His song of praise unto God. It is *His* song and not theirs. The redeemed, too,

have their song, as we shall immediately see, but here the song of Christ must have its preëminence.

Christ has gone in before God in the glad consciousness of an accomplished work which makes it possible for God to keep His character of righteousness while *justifying the ungodly*. This was the reason why Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for, in it, he says: "The righteousness of God is revealed" (ROM. 1:17). It is the righteousness of God a sinner fears; he is not afraid of His love, but of His righteousness, and the gospel reveals that righteousness as not *against* the sinner but *for* him.

Christ became a *Saviour* by coming from the glory which He had with God from the beginning, and descending into the depths where sin had plunged man, and there, bearing the full shock of its penalty, He met the requirements of divine justice, and from that awful depth He was raised, and was constituted the Head of that New Creation that was the fruit of His work.

In the eighth Psalm we read: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" It is evident the Psalmist here is thinking of man such as he is by reason of the Fall—a ruined creature. What is *he* that God should be mindful of him? By the original creation he was "a little lower than the angels," with dominion over the works of God's hands, and "all things put under his feet." That was man, as he came from the Creator's hand, but from that estate he is fallen. Does God leave him to cherish only the memory of what he once was? Does He provide no way out of the ruin into which he has come? This question is answered in the epistle to the Hebrews, where there is given to us an inspired interpretation of the eighth Psalm. There is, in fact, a Second Man, who takes the place of the first man, and stands in connection with the whole scene as Redeemer and Restorer, "made a little lower than the angels," as the apostle explains, "on

account of the suffering of death." Man was subject to death, which was sin's penalty; and Christ, in the voluntary assumption of the penalty, glorified God in revealing the holiness of His nature, and, at the same time, in providing a way of escape from sin.

Out of this depth of humiliation Christ, the Second Man, has come to be set in a place of supremacy over the whole habitable world. We do not as yet see all things put in subjection under him, and this the apostle affirms, but we see Jesus: "Crowned with glory and honor, who was made a little lower than the angels on account of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for all" (HEB. 2:9. Gr.). The habitable world that is to be is not to be put back into the hands of the first man. He has proved himself incompetent. Only the strong hand of the Second Man, the Head of the New Creation, can restore and govern the restored earth. The creation of man is vindicated by his redemption from the Fall. The eighth Psalm of which we have been thinking is prophetic of the Millennial earth with Christ reigning over it. In the Millennial earth Israel holds the central position, and without Israel's being brought back into divine favor, no Millennial earth is possible. The blessings connected with the Millennium are of an earthly character, and, manifestly, belong to Israel.

Under the pressure of a trouble such as the world has never yet seen, Israel shall be brought in supplication before Him whom they have rejected, and of whose exaltation they do not know. They shall find that in His hands alone there is power to establish them in a place of unchangeable favor. As the "Lion of Judah," He will assume power to act in their behalf, and it will be shown that they also have been redeemed not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but by "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish" (1 PET. 1:19). Because He was the Lamb that was *slain,* He can act as the Lion, and worthily break the seals of the book, and bring to an issue the purposes of God.

When he comes forward to take the book out of the right

hand of Him who sat upon the throne, the cherubim and the elders fall down before Him and worship. They unite now in the glad song of a full redemption. The cherubim, who had been dishonored by the fall of one of their number, can now sing together with the redeemed from the earth: "Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast purchased to God by thy blood men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and made them to our God kings and priests, and they shall reign over the earth." The theme of their song makes it perfectly clear that we are at the end of the Jewish age, for they of whom they sing are the redeemed that are still upon the earth and about to enter upon their reign over it.

The priestly character of this royal company is indicated by the "golden bowls of incense" that they carry. The song they sing is new, not that Christ is new to them, but that new material is furnished for praise because the work of redemption is accomplished. God's purposes are all to be told out; and He, who is clothed with power for the execution of them, is upon the scene. He is assuming the character of a Lion in behalf of the Jewish people who are to be brought back into immediate relationship to Himself. The world to come is about to be made subject to Him, and to the redeemed of the earth that shall reign with Him.

The song of the redeemed is taken up by others, and it echoes throughout creation, until the myriad voices are heard in earth and hell. These echoes are borne on by "the voice of many angels round the throne." These angels are apart from the cherubim and the elders, and in a circle outside of them altogether. The number of the angels is "ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands of thousands," and they are heard, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." It should be here noticed that it is the voice of the angels *saying*, not singing. The angels do not sing. Only the cherubim and the

redeemed of the earth sing the song of redemption. A song is made up of major and minor chords, or of both combined, and the angels can furnish neither. The major chords are the chords of victory, whereas the minor chords are associated with death and sorrow. There is that in fallen man, which makes him responsive to the minor tones so universally found in nature. The ocean breaks upon the shore with a restless moan, and even the full-throated song of the bird has in it a touch of sorrow. The song of the nightingale is the sweetest on earth, and yet there is none sadder. Nature is fallen, and its natural tones are in the minor key, but in the redemption of fallen nature there is struck the note of victory. *Music* is made by lost ones redeemed from their lost estate. The angels are unfallen; they know nothing of human wretchedness or sorrow; they cannot strike the notes of victory; they cannot, like redeemed men, join in the ascription of praise to One who has brought them out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set their feet upon a rock, and established their goings and put a new song in their mouth. The angels do not sing; they stand around the throne, *saying,* "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Their ascription of praise blends with the redemption song, and nature throughout its entire extent responds to the glorious harmony. "And every creature which is in the heaven and upon earth and under the earth and upon the sea, even all things in them, heard I saying, To him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb be blessing, and honor, and glory, and might, unto the ages of ages."

This gives the full-voiced expression of praise found in the Psalm: "Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity" (Ps. 98:7-9). Long indeed has the weary world waited for the dawn of this glorious day, when

" the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God " (ROM. 8:21. R. V.). We are come now to the place where the streaks of that dawning day are quivering in the sky. The book of the eternal purpose is about to be opened, and the pledges of God to His suffering people are about to be made good. The judgment now to fall upon the world shall bring about the suppression of all evil, and shall establish the throne of Christ in righteousness. Around that throne the redeemed shall gather, and join in the glorious song which they alone can sing. The harp, itself the symbol of inanimate nature, and, in itself helpless to produce music, shall at last respond to the master hand that holds it. The testimony of the angels is stilled by the final " Amen " of the cherubim, while the elders fall down before the throne and worship. The object of adoration unto the ages of ages will be the Person of the glorious Redeemer; His essential, underived glory will be the light of heaven; His acquired glory, by the redemption of man, the theme of praise forever and ever.

XIII

THE END OF THE JEWISH AGE

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living beings saying, as a voice of thunder, Come. And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat upon it had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown, and he went forth conquering and to conquer. And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living being saying, Come. And another, a red horse, went forth; and to him that sat upon it, it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another; and there was given to him a great sword. And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living being say, Come. And I saw, and behold a black horse, and he that sat upon it having a balance in his hand. And I heard, as it were, a voice in the midst of the four living beings saying, A measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling; and hurt thou not the oil and the wine. And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the fourth living being say, Come. And I saw, and behold a pale horse, and his name that sat upon it was Death, and hades followed with him. And there was given him authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the beasts of the earth. And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw beneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O sovereign Ruler, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given to them each a white robe; and it was said to them that they should rest yet a little while until both their fellow-servants and their brethren, who were about to be killed as they, should be fulfilled. And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell upon the earth, as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when shaken by a great wind. And the heaven was removed as a scroll rolled up, and every mountain and island were removed out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief cap-

tains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who can stand?—(Chapter 6.)

THE scene of activity now shifts from heaven to earth, and divine judgments that inaugurate the seventieth and last week of Daniel's prophecy begin. If we are to get any clear conception of what is now before us, it is of the utmost importance to have an accurate interpretation of that prophecy. The terms of it are not so obscure as many have thought. Let us examine them. "Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: [marginal punctuation] it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times. And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and his end shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined. And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and for the half of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the consummation, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolator" (DAN. 9:24-27. R.V.).

We are not concerned with the sixty-nine weeks, which, we hold, ran their course prior to the coming of Christ and were ended at His crucifixion, but with the final, or seventieth week,

which brings to an issue the *entire* prophecy. The seventy weeks are divided into three parts: seven, and sixty-two, and one. During seven weeks the city was to be rebuilt. After the sixty-two, which follow the seven, and therefore after sixty-nine, the Messiah should be "cut off"; and this can refer to nothing except the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. The prophecy does not end here, but goes beyond the crucifixion, stating, that "the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary."

It is commonly agreed that the destruction of the city and the sanctuary was effected by the Romans under Titus in the year 70 A. D. It is the *people* of "the prince that shall come" who do this. Nothing further is said about the destruction of the city, and the balance of the prophecy refers to the *prince,* and a series of events connected with him. He is a *Roman* prince, because he springs from the people that destroy the city, and what is affirmed of him excludes the thought of his being Titus, or any other Roman prince who has yet lived. The fact that he is a *Roman,* and that he violates a covenant, and is ultimately destroyed, proves conclusively that Christ is *not* the prince here spoken of.

This prince, according to the prophet, shall make a firm covenant with the "many," that is, the mass of the people, for one week: and for the half of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the consummation, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolater. This *one week,* otherwise unnoticed, *must be* the seventieth and last week of the prophecy. For this week the prince enters into covenant-relation with "the many" in Israel. In the middle of the week he violates the covenant, and this is followed by the coming of a desolater upon whom judgment is executed. These events characterize the final week, and therefore carry us to the end of the entire prophecy. The divine purpose in the whole period, according to the prophecy, is to "finish transgression, and to make an

end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy."

It is perfectly clear that this has never yet been accomplished. No covenant, ending the seventy predicted weeks and bringing to an issue all that is here affirmed, has ever been made by any Roman prince with Daniel's people. The Jews are now, and have been, since the destruction of Jerusalem, scattered among the nations of the earth. The prophecy of Daniel has never been fulfilled. It never *can* be fulfilled unless they are restored to divine favor, and brought back from the land of wandering, where, like Cain, they have been banished, and, like him also, with the mark of preservation upon them. To displace Israel by Christianity, with no promise of future restoration, is to make this prophecy of Daniel and others of like tenor, devoid of all meaning. The words of the prophecy refer to Daniel's people, and a Roman prince in covenant with them. The prophecy is continuous, and nothing is told us of what was to follow the rejection of Christ, except the destruction of the city, and the covenant of the prince, and the events therewith connected. The long interval of Christian centuries between the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth forms no part of the prophecy. Daniel says nothing of this interval between the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth: if we want to find out about this we must look elsewhere in Scripture.

At the end of the sixty-ninth week the Jews came under judicial infliction of God, and they continue in that condition until "the times of the Gentiles" run their course, when, according to the apostle Paul, "all Israel shall be saved." This salvation shall be accomplished for them during the seven years of their unfulfilled term of prophetic history. That period is manifestly in the future. It shall be ushered in by terrific judgments, and shall be terminated by the coming of the Son of man "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." The last part of Daniel's prophecy leaps over the

intervening centuries, and applies to this final time of Israel's history. He speaks as if there were to be no break between the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth. Such a break there is, and unless it be taken into consideration there is no harmony in the prophetic utterances. For these seven years the prince makes a covenant with Israel; in the midst of the week he causes "the sacrifice and oblation to cease"; this is followed by the coming of "a desolater" upon whom, at the end of the seven years, is poured the wrath of God. This outlines for us the general character of that final period. A more detailed account is furnished by the book of Revelation.

This period is inaugurated by the breaking of the first seal. Christ, as the Lion of Judah, takes up once more the cause of Israel, and carries it steadily on to a triumphant issue.

When the first seal is broken a voice from the cherubim is heard, saying, "Come." It is not "Come and *see*," as though John were summoned to look, but simply "Come." It is the voice of one of the cherubim calling forth the instrument of divine judgment. The cherubim are still in executive connection with the government of God. That government has respect to the earth upon which judgment is now to be executed. The successional calamities, coming forth as the seals are broken, are thus under the order and control of the divine administration. No instrument of judgment appears until summoned by the call of the cherubim. After the summons is given, John says: "I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat upon it had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown, and he went forth conquering and to conquer."

The rider of this horse, going forth to victory, looks like Christ—and this is the theory commonly held—but this is not true, for Christ is not subject to any such call of the cherubim. When *He* appears, the armies of heaven follow Him; and that is not until the *end* of the seven years. This rider comes forth "conquering and to conquer." The bow and the crown speak of far-reaching and successful conquest.

The discordant interpretations of the historical school begin with the breaking of the seals. Nothing but hopeless confusion can result from the attempt to show that a *future* event has *already* been fulfilled. It is no wonder the book has remained sealed to many, even after it has been so manifestly opened. The facts of history, together with the plain language of Revelation, have been strained to the last limit to produce an agreement; and the many tongues of interpretation testify to the hopelessness of the effort. Nothing has ever transpired in human history to fill up the measure demanded by the majestic language of this part of Revelation. The attempt to reconcile past history with what we find here is to make words meaningless, and lead the seeker after truth into an oriental maze of human imagination. Let us remember that God has purposes *yet to be fulfilled,* and we shall escape from the bewildering confusion of the historical interpreters, and, at the same time, rescue the book from the dishonor put upon it.

The victorious rider of the white horse has not yet appeared on the field of human history. There is no other in Scripture with whom he can be identified save the prince of Daniel's prophecy. His crown is the "*stephanos*"; and not the "*diadema.*" His weapon is the "*bow*"; and not the "*sword.*" He is not Christ, though he may look like Him; for Christ does not appear on the scene until the seven years are ended. In the nineteenth chapter, where the appearing of Christ is announced, He is represented as a rider upon "a white horse"; but He has a crown of "many diadems," and His weapon is the "sword."

The "bow," borne by the warrior of the first seal, suggests "the fiery darts" of Satan; and this rider is, in all probability, the *seventh head* of the beast of the thirteenth chapter, which is wounded when the fourth trumpet sounds, and healed on the sounding of the sixth. If he can be compared with any historical personage of the past, it might be with Napoleon Bonaparte, whose extraordinary career electrified the world. Such

a prince, in order to fulfill the prophecy of Daniel, must come. He may represent himself as Christ, the conquering Messiah for whom the Jews are looking, and deceive many. Should he offer himself as such to Israel, we would have under this seal, and what follows in the three succeeding ones, perfect uniformity with the prophecy of Jesus. A careful consideration of this prophecy, to which all others must conform, will help us to understand not only what we have here, but also what follows.

"And Jesus went out and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered and said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, his disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the consummation of the age? And Jesus answered and said unto them, See that no one lead you astray. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and shall lead astray many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled: for this must needs come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines [and pestilences] and earthquakes in divers places; but all these things are the beginning of travail-pains. Then shall they deliver you up to affliction and kill you, and ye shall be hated of all the nations for my name's sake. And then shall many stumble and deliver one another up, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise and shall lead astray many. And because lawlessness shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall grow cold; but he that hath endured to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the habitable earth, for a witness unto all the nations; and then shall the end have come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of through Daniel the

prophet, standing in the holy place (he that readeth, let him understand), then let those that are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him that is on the house-top not come down to take away what is in the house; and let not him that is in the field return to take his garment. But woe to those that are with child, and to those that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in winter, nor upon the sabbath. For then shall be great tribulation such as hath not been since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be; and except those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any one say to you, Behold, here is the Christ, or here, believe it not: for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if it were possible, even the elect. Behold, I have foretold you. Therefore if they say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth; behold, [he is] in the inner chambers, believe it not. For, as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. For wherever the carcase is, there shall the eagles be gathered together. But immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light; and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the land lament; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from [one] end of the heavens to [the other] end of them" (MATT. 24:1-31, Gr.).

These words carry us to the consummation of the Jewish age, when "the Son of man" shall be seen coming "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Jesus had left the temple with the disciples, and they call His attention to the magnificent buildings. He replies: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Subsequently, when on the Mount of Olives, the disciples ask: "When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the consummation of the age?" The word translated "age" is not *kosmos*—the physical world; but *aion*—a marked-off period of time. The destruction of the temple meant for them the end of the levitical age, and the introduction of the age of the Messiah.

The disciples, we must remember, were Israelites, and were inspired with Israelitish hopes which were founded on Old Testament promises. They were looking forward to the age of the Messiah which would bring to an end the age in which they were living. This, in their minds apparently, was coincident with the destruction of the temple. This at any rate is the plain import of the question, "When shall these things be?" that is, When shall the temple be destroyed? They knew nothing of the dispersion of the Jewish people which was to follow the rejection of Christ, nor did they know of the intervening Christian age before the levitical age should be terminated by the coming of the Son of man. This was a mystery committed to the apostle Paul, as he declares in his epistle to the Romans. In answering the disciples' question Jesus makes no reference to the Church, except in the veiled speech of the parables that follow the words we are now considering. In Matthew He makes no reference to the destruction of the temple, but in Luke He does this, and speaks explicitly of the destruction of the city by Titus. Matthew records that part of His answer that refers to the consummation of the levitical age and the coming of the Messianic kingdom. He first warns them against the appearing of false Messiahs, saying, "Many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and shall lead astray many": and then there were to come "wars and rumors of wars"; nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: followed by famines and pestilences.

Before going further with this answer, let us notice the exact conformity with what is given us in the breaking of the first four seals. We have already considered the rider of

the white horse. He is the last of the many that claim to be Christ.

The breaking of the second seal is followed by the appearance of a "red horse," whose rider has power "to take peace from the earth." This conforms with the second sign spoken of by Jesus: "There shall be wars and rumors of wars."

When the third seal is broken a "black horse" is called out, and the rider has "a balance" in his hand. From the midst of the cherubim a voice is heard saying, "A measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling; and hurt thou not the oil and the wine." This is plainly a declaration of prices prevailing during a famine. The "oil and the wine," which are the possessions of the rich, are not touched. The stroke falls most heavily upon the common people. This corresponds with what Jesus says about famine following in the wake of war.

A "pale horse" appears after the breaking of the fourth seal, and the name of its rider is "Death." He is given authority to smite a fourth part of the earth, and "to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the beasts of the earth."

Jesus also speaks of pestilence following in the path of famine, and death is the ordinary term for it. For instance, the scourge of the middle ages was called "the black death." The order of events are alike in the prophecy of Jesus and in the book of Revelation. The successional events that introduce the seven years of Israel's restoration are imperial conquest, war, famine, and pestilence. These are followed, according to the words of Jesus, by earthquakes in divers places; but these things are only the beginning of travail-pains, when it shall come to pass, as written in the prophecy, "a nation shall be born at once." This answers also to Paul's declaration concerning the creation which is "groaning in the bondage of corruption"; it is waiting for the liberty which can only be brought about by "the manifestation of the sons of God." "For we know," he says, "that the whole creation groaneth

and travaileth in pain together until now" (ROM. 8:22). Thus creation, throughout its whole extent, is linked with man in his fallen condition, and the travail-pains that introduce the seven years of Israel's restoration are the prelude to the everlasting glory to be ushered in. Though these sorrows be unequaled and far-reaching, they are nevertheless God's necessary judgments: but the throne is circled by "the bow of promise," and "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever" (Is. 32:17). When the storm is passed, God's people "shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Is. 32:18).

After the opening of the fifth seal there is heard a cry of the martyrs "that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." This is also in harmony with our Lord's prophecy: "Then shall they deliver you up to affliction and kill you, and ye shall be hated of all the nations for my name's sake." During this time of restoration, characterized by so much sorrow, there will be a harvest of martyrs. Men and women, loyal in their return of heart to God, shall seal their testimony with their blood. The cry goes up from the altar where they have perished: "How long, O sovereign Ruler, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" The souls of these slain are spoken of as *under the altar,* which marks them out as given up in sacrifice to God. Their cry is another indication that the day of grace is past; for they appeal to God for judgment. In answer to their plea, "white robes" are given them, and they are charged to rest yet for a little while until others, who are about to be killed as they were, should be added to their number. A period of still greater tribulation is about to come, and others shall be slain for the Word of God and win the martyr's crown. These spoken of here are evidently slain during the first half of the seven years, while the others for whom they are to wait shall be slain during the last three and a half years, which period constitutes the final and *the great trib-*

ulation. The full company of these sufferers will come before us in the twentieth chapter.

When the sixth seal is broken there is a great earthquake; and the sun becomes black as sackcloth of hair; the moon becomes as blood, and the stars of heaven fall to the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. The heaven departs as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island are moved out of their places.

The same signs are given in the prophecy of Jesus: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light; and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the land lament; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Manifestly Jesus is speaking of "the great tribulation," which extends through the second half of the week, and is terminated by His coming. When the sixth seal is broken the book is not fully opened. The seventh seal must be broken before all the counsels of God are told out. The portending signs of the sixth seal are anticipatory, and foreshadow what shall take place when the seventh trumpet sounds. They are signs, nevertheless, of awful realities; and the dwellers on earth really believe that the great day of God's wrath has come. But the red glare of that day shall smite the world with a fiercer flame than that which burns in the revolutionary forces found in action under the sixth seal. The description is figurative; for the heavens do not literally pass away until after the Millennial reign of Christ. The great earthquake speaks of the upheaval of human government. Anarchy and riot-rule follow in the path of war, and stable forms of government are overthrown. The "darkening of the sun" seems naturally to refer to the collapse of some imperial head of power that might result from such a political convulsion. His fall would involve the

fall of others, exercising derived authority such as is symbolized by "the moon and stars." The removal of mountains and islands shows the rapidly shifting centers of human government. The whole description is a vivid picture of the end to which the kingdoms of this world are hastening with ever-accelerating speed. This will not be admitted by the political optimism of to-day, but it is vain to say, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace." There are burning in the bowels of the earth restless fires to which many an active Stromboli bears witness. More dangerous than these are the slumbering passions of men under existing empires of the earth that shall bring about a political upheaval the like of which the world has never seen. Not many years ago Arica lay fair on the South American shore. The people were in peace, unconscious of the roaring flames that were eating their way toward them. There was a tremendous shock; the towers of the city fell, and the entire population lay groaning and dying in the ruins of the city; then the sea, that had shuddered and fled away from the shore, came rushing back, and swept the region for two miles inland. Men's passions are more fierce than the fire that brought desolation to Arica, more difficult to restrain than the waves of the sea that rolled over that smitten shore. This restless spirit of man is not to be curbed much longer by the imperial decrees of government. The empires of the world are doomed, and they are to become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ. The ground swell of the coming political overthrow is sounding every day louder and louder. Men may sneer at the prophets of coming political disaster, but the Bible takes account of such scoffers, saying, "In the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for from the time the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this is hidden from them, through their own wilfulness, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and an earth, subsisting out of water and in water; by which the world that then was, over-

flowed with water, perished; but the heavens that are now, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up, reserved for fire against a day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But let not this one thing, beloved, be hidden from you, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some account slackness, but is long-suffering towards you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a rushing noise, and the elements burning with heat shall be dissolved; the earth also and the works in it shall be burned up. All these things, then, being thus to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in holy behavior and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, by reason of which [the] heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and [the] elements shall melt with fervent heat? But we, according to his promise, wait for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 PET. 3:3-13 Gr.). Let us give up our political optimism, and give some serious attention to the Word of God. The opening of the sixth seal does not bring us to the end of all things of which Peter speaks; but in the wreck of falling empires under this seal it shall seem indeed as if the day of judgment were come: "and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman and every freeman," shall hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and shall say to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come and who shall be able to stand?"

On a small scale such an effect was produced during the French Revolution. Men became frenzied, and the streets of Paris were turned into rivers of blood. The judgment of the sixth seal is of far wider significance. The inhabitants of the earth believe in all reality that the end of the world is come.

It is indeed the beginning of the end. The sounding of the trumpets introduce the successional judgments that close this age, but it is not until the seventh angel sounds, that great voices in heaven are heard, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." This is the glorious consummation toward which everything is moving, and each stroke of divine judgment brings nearer the hour of promised deliverance.

The book of God's eternal purpose is still in the hands of enthroned Omnipotence, and He, who has proved Himself worthy to break the seals of that book, is also clothed with omnipotent power to carry those purposes into effect, and bring the kingdoms of the world into subjection to Himself. "Ask of me," says Jehovah to Him in the second Psalm, "and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and for thy possession the ends of the earth." He has but to *ask*, and all shall be accomplished. He reigns now upon the Father's throne; but the hour is coming, and is marked in the calendar of God, when He shall clothe Himself with imperial power, and reign over the kings of the earth. With this King there is victory and universal supremacy.

The second Psalm closes with the solemn warning: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, for in a little will his anger kindle! Happy all they that take refuge in him" (Ps. 2: 12. Heb.). This is the divine call to bow before Him now while His wrath is slumbering. His wrath shall not be held in abeyance forever; for the Mighty God hath spoken, and out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, the light of His glory shall shine. Though the tempest gathers around Him, the fire of His holiness shall consume before Him, and the heavens shall declare His righteousness.

This is the way and this is the end. Happy are they that take refuge in *Him!*

XIV

ISRAEL'S INHERITANCE

And after this I saw four angels standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow upon the earth, nor upon the sea, nor upon any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from [the] sun-rising, having [the] seal of [the] living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it had been given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth nor the sea, nor the trees, until we shall have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads. And I heard the number of those that were sealed: a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Nephthalim, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Zebulon, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand sealed.—(Chapter 7: 1-8.)

THE political convulsion following the opening of the sixth seal is evidently to be of far-reaching extent, for it inspires terror in the hearts of all classes; from the kings of the earth and the great men, to every bondman and freeman, who alike call on the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne. But, as we have seen, this will be only the beginning of sorrows, and is to be followed by "the *great* tribulation" referred to by Daniel, and the Lord Jesus. This tribulation begins with the sounding of the trumpets. These trumpets naturally suggest the Jewish Feast of Trumpets, to which various meanings have been assigned. Maimonides says the blowing of the trumpets was to awaken the people from their spiritual slumber, and to

prepare them for the great Day of Atonement ten days after. It was commonly regarded as the anniversary of the birthday of the world. The sounding of the trumpets is surely God's voice of recall to the people. They are summoned to meet the "great high priest," who has already passed through the heavens with the blood of atonement for them, and who is now about to come out to put away forever the iniquities of the children of Israel. As a matter of fact, the antitype of the great Day of Atonement began when Jesus passed into the heavens, and it will be brought to a close when He comes out.

These Christian ages constitute the *interval* between His going *in* and His coming *out.* His coming out is not for the Church, but for *Israel;* though, as we have seen, the Church shall be caught up to meet Him at the beginning of the seven years in which the restoration of Israel shall be accomplished. Their sins and their iniquities shall be then put away. The Great High Priest will invest Himself with His garments of glory and beauty, and reign after the order of Melchisedec as a royal Priest upon His throne. The assumption of the royal priesthood will inaugurate the Millennial kingdom of which the Feast of Tabernacles is a type.

Before the sounding of the trumpets, which shall accomplish the recall of Israel, God is seen in sovereign grace sealing a definite number for preservation during "the great tribulation." To lose sight of a *literal* Israel here is to throw a pall of darkness over the whole subject. Plain speech, such as this, has never been more obscured by the writings of learned men. Lange says: "So far as the Jews are concerned, those commentators are entirely at odds with the text who teach that the Jews in a literal sense are intended here. As surely as the New Jerusalem of Chapter xxi, cannot denote a new Jewish city; as surely as the term *Jews,* as used in the seven epistles, denotes the very opposite of Judaists, namely, the true spiritual Israel; just so surely are the people of Israel, here, representative of the whole body of the people of God. It can be affirmed only that converts from Israel are included." Again he says:

"The people of Israel is the typical *servant of God,* His elect, whose office it is to disseminate His law amongst the Gentiles before the *Servant of God* in the truest and fullest sense of the term, the Messiah, is spoken of. The New Testament, again, takes up this typical import of Israel, but only decisively to transfer it to the spiritual Israel, the New Testament faithful people, or people of faith."

After this fashion, literal Israel has been disinherited, and the Church has taken possession of what was never intended for her. All the curses have been left to be borne by a *literal* Israel, but the promised *blessings* have been filched away, and appropriated by a *spiritual* Israel.

The Church, losing sight of her own riches, has nevertheless signally failed to enrich herself by this attempted robbery of Israel. The pressing of this claim in the interest of the Church has done more damage to an intelligent understanding of the Scriptures than many people are aware of. What God has joined together let not man put asunder, and God will not allow such violence to be done to his ancient people.

Let us honestly and intelligently read the promises of God to Israel, and we must be convinced that the Church has never, in an adequate way, become the legitimate heir of them; and there is no probability that she ever will. Let us give God the credit of meaning what He says, and we shall be delivered from the spiritualizing process that divests words of their meaning. Christ came not "to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfill"; and we may trust the ability of God to keep, to the last item, the covenant He has made with His ancient people. Whatever their failure may be, His love for them abides, and it is part of His eternal purpose, that "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." They are a people with whom God is in covenant, and a "spiritual Israel" cannot, without a violation of the covenant, displace them. They are spoken of variously as Hebrews, Jews and Israelites; and the perfection of Scripture implies a distinction to be observed in these terms. They

were called "Hebrews" by the surrounding nations, and, when in communication with them, they applied that same name to themselves. The name "Jew" springs from the royal tribe of Judah, and originally referred to one belonging to that tribe. After the disruption, this name applied to the separate kingdom of Judah, in contradistinction to the seceding ten tribes which retained the name of *Israel* or *Israelites.* The term "Israelite" is derived from Israel, a name given to Jacob, the founder of the twelve tribes. Jacob himself did not answer to the *meaning* of this name until he returned from the land of his exile, and no more will the modern Israelites answer to it until they have returned from the place of their banishment. Before the disruption following the death of Solomon the people were known among themselves as the twelve tribes of Israel. When the revolt came, Judah and Benjamin are spoken of after the tribal head of Judah as *Jews.* The ten tribes in the separate monarchy of the north were afterwards *alone* known as "Israelites." For many centuries before Christ the distinction between the *Jew* and the *Israelite* was maintained. The Israelites are never spoken of as Jews, for this would bring them under the tribal rod of Judah. The right of a Jew to the title of Israel antedated the disruption, and was based on the common origin of all the tribes in Jacob.

Before Solomon died, and because of the evils he did, the Lord said, "I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give *one tribe* to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen" (1 KINGS 11:11-13). It is quite evident from these words, that "the kingdom of Israel" was to be *rent away* from Solomon's son, to whom was to be given, in addition to his own tribe of Judah, *one other tribe,* which answers to Benjamin.

The two kingdoms continued side by side without recon-

ciliation until about 725 B. C., when the kingdom of Israel was carried away into the Assyrian captivity. The kingdom of Judah continued for more than 130 years after and was then swept away into the Babylonian captivity. From the Assyrian captivity the Israelites *never returned.* There was a return from the Babylonian captivity, and the descendants of these exiles constituted the *Jewish nation* of our Lord's day. There never was any *national* return of Israel to their land, and there never will be until the hand that scattered them re-gathers them. Israel, as distinct from Judah, had no part in the crucifixion of Christ. Individual Israelites were there, as in the case of Paul, who belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe *loaned* to Judah at the time of the disruption. The only one of the disciples that was a *Jew* was Judas Iscariot the traitor. The tribe of Judah (with Benjamin as noted) was alone concerned in the crucifixion of Jesus. In this tribe was vested the title to the throne of David as King over *all Israel.* Jacob in his dying prophecy said: "The sceptre shall not depart from *Judah,* nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Christ belonged to the tribe of Judah, and the title to David's throne, both through Joseph and Mary, became legally His. Dying, He took the *title away with Him.* He holds that title yet, and shall hold it until His coronation. He was owned of the Magi as the "King of the Jews"; but from the Jews themselves He obtained no recognition. They made objection to Pilate's superscription on the cross:

"JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS."

The chief priests said to Pilate: "Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written" (JOHN 19: 19, 21-22).

In this rejection of Him by Judah we have the full significance of John's statement: "He came unto his own, and his

own received him not." Upon Judah *alone* rests the responsibility of the rejection of the Messiah. With this rejection, Israel, as a separate nation, had nothing to do. The tribes of Israel were *lost;* but Jesus had an interest in them, as is evident in His words to the woman of Canaan: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Israel was lost, not only morally, but gone from the scene physically, and scattered abroad among the nations. Where they are, or what they have become, cannot be determined until Christ, as He has told us in His prophecy, "shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Gathered they *must* be for the redemption of promises made to them.

It is interesting to notice that, immediately after speaking of their being gathered by "angel hands," Jesus says: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Why does He call our attention to the *fig tree?* In order to learn a parable from it. It is the illustration of a truth of deepest import to the nation of Israel. A better apprehension of this will be obtained, if we look first at some verses of the eightieth Psalm that give us a symbol of *Israel.*

The Psalmist says: "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river." It is of *all Israel* the Psalmist is speaking and not of the divided kingdom. God had brought Israel as a *vine* out of Egypt. He had driven out the nations of Canaan and turned their land into a vineyard for this vine. The vine rooted itself and grew, overshadowing the mountains

and extending from the river to the sea. Next the Psalmist speaks of the desolation of the vineyard: "Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance" (Ps. 80:12-16). Notwithstanding God's care and labor with this vine He could get no fruit from it. The prophet says: "When he looked for his vine to bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes." The failure was not in God, but in them. He had done all He could for the vineyard, but in vain. Then He permitted the hedges to be broken down, and the vineyard was laid waste. The Assyrians carried Israel into captivity, and the vineyard was trodden down by the feet of the Gentiles. But God has not failed in His purposes. He started a fresh work in their behalf, which Jesus represents by another parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down" (LUKE 13:6-9). This "fig tree" planted in the desolated vineyard was a symbol of the Jewish nation in the time of Christ. Fruit from that fig tree He sought for three years and more, and found none. Then the fig tree was cursed. Producing His credentials as the Messiah, He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem where He was already discrowned, and where He knew the multitude, which was now shouting "Hosanna," would soon shout "Crucify him," and, looking about Him in silent contempla-

tion, He left the city for Bethany. "And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it" (MARK 11:12-14). This cursing of the fig tree has given the commentators no little trouble. The perplexity is found in the apparent unreasonableness of looking for fruit on a tree at a time when fruit could not be expected. It expressly says, "*the time of figs was not yet;*" and the apparent injustice of the sentence pronounced upon it has been made the ground of a grave impeachment of the Gospel, as well as of our Saviour's character.

But let us endeavor to get at the full and true application. Israel, as a whole, had failed. The vineyard in which they had been planted had been laid waste, and God had scattered the nation to the ends of the earth. A remnant of Israel, represented by Judah and Benjamin, came back, and, according to His own figure, was as "a fig tree planted in the vineyard." The peculiarity of a fig tree is the fact that the fruit comes before the leaves, and consequently if the tree produced leaves, it should also have had figs. The whole question turns on the *pretensions* of the tree. Had it not proclaimed by its foliage the presence of figs, the Saviour never should have sought fruit from it. If it was not the time for figs, it was—for the same reason—*not the time for leaves.* Jesus came to this Jewish remnant of Israel, and found plenty of *religious profession;* but when He sought for the fruit that should be found with this there was *none.*

There is the deepest significance in the expression: "The time of figs was not yet." Paul says: "Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. For I would not,

brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (ROM. 11:1, 2, 25, 26). "The time for figs" is not until after the times of the Gentiles have run out. Israel is yet to be revived, and Jesus says: "Learn a parable of the *fig tree;* When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh" (MATT. 24:32). What is the meaning of the modern Zionist movement, and the widespread interest in the return of the Jews to Palestine? A distinguished Jewish Rabbi said recently: "There is no Jewish nation, and there never will be. The Zionists that make so much noise do not represent Jewish sentiment. There is no general movement to restore Israel to Palestine. We preach to-day not Jewish nationality, but universal Judaism, humanitarianism, the unity of God and man. Washington is to us a second Moses. When he freed America from tyranny he created a haven of refuge for all the oppressed, including the Jews. Why do we need Palestine? We have America. That is enough."

This unbelieving surrender of the promises only shows how completely Israel has given up her God. But the God of Israel abides, and He will yet come forth and recover the glory due Him. Back the Israelites shall go, whether they know it or not, and God will vindicate His faithfulness and glory. The fig tree, though barren, still abides. His branch shall yet become tender, and put forth leaves, and we shall know that summer is nigh. "Shaken by a mighty wind," this fig tree shall cast all "untimely figs"; and then shall follow the vintage of God. Not a harvest of *figs;* but fruit from the original *vine.* The shaking of the fig tree shall produce exercise of heart that shall bring Jesus and Nathanael face to face.

The light shall shine *first in Galilee,* according to Isaiah

(9:1), and intimation is given of this by the angel at the sepulcher when he said to the women, "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you" (MARK 16:6-7). In *Galilee* Jesus began His miracles, and manifested forth His glory. In Galilee He will manifest His glory again.

After he ascended from the Mount of Olives: "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (ACTS 1:10-11). *Nathanael* was of Cana, the scene of Christ's first miracle, and when Jesus would go forth into Galilee He findeth Philip, and "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith unto him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (JOHN 1:45-51).

Jesus, being the Son of Mary *actually,* and the Son of Joseph *legally,* inherited the indisputable title to David's throne, which, descending in these two lines from David's sons, Na-

than and Solomon, thus exclusively centered in Him. This all-important fact would be well known to Nathanael; and Nathanael is a type of the unbelief of Israel which shall prevail at the time of Israel's restoration. Illustrating that unbelief, he says, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip says, "Come and see;" and while he is yet coming, the Lord says, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" It should be noted that Jesus speaks of him as an *Israelite;* not as a Jew. Nathanael says, "Whence knowest thou me?" and Jesus answers, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Under the *fig tree!* How this points on to the coming day when the fig tree shall again put forth leaves! Nathanael was having exercise of heart toward God. He was longing for the time when Messiah should appear and again establish Israel as a nation. The words of Jesus search him out, and he says, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Why does he call Him the King of *Israel?*

In the bitter trouble of coming days; under the pressure of a famine such as the world has never seen; the dispersed of Israel shall be driven by their necessities to Christ; and He, searching them through and through, shall be owned by them, as the "Son of God, and the King of Israel." They shall see "heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Jacob, after his long exile, shall be again at Bethel.

In Jacob's life there is pictured the history of his twelve sons. Jacob cannot be *Israel,* until after his wanderings are over, and he is back to *Bethel,* the house of God. He had named the place *Bethel* when he first slept under the stars, and dreamed of the angels ascending and descending upon the ladder. He has that vision when he is about to *leave* the land. During the twenty years of his exile he gets no other. When Joseph is born, Jacob turns his face home; and when he gets finally back to Bethel, he names it again "El Bethel," The God of the House of God. God must be absolutely sovereign,

and Jacob must own this before he can be *Israel.* When he does own it, God says to him: "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel" (GEN. 35:11-15). He names it simply Bethel, as if he had never done so before. And he never had, intelligently. The next verse tells us of the birth of Benjamin. He is born at Ephrath, which word means fruitful. With the birth of Benjamin Jacob's history starts afresh at Hebron where he speaks to us in a different character as the father of *Joseph.*

When Israel, now cast out of her inheritance, shall be brought back from banishment, and own, with Nathanael's faith, that Christ is the "Son of God; the King of Israel"; they shall have restored to them the Bethel they have so long lost. Benjamin shall then be born for them. Christ shall act in power. He shall bring the whole nation under blessing. They shall see "heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

"In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Is. 27:1-6).

The vineyard is restored!

We return now to our chapter in Revelation and see the

beginning of Israel's national restoration. God acts for them in sovereign grace before the great tribulation begins.

Four angels are seen standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow upon the earth, nor upon the sea, nor upon any tree.

To the four corners of the earth Israel has gone in her dispersion, and to the four corners of the earth the four angels go to restrain the desolating winds of judgment until Christ shall gather His elect. John says: "I saw another angel ascending from the sun-rising, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it had been given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth nor the sea, nor the trees, until we shall have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads." This proclamation is followed by the announcement of the definite sealing of the twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes except Dan. These sealed ones, if language means anything, are literal Israelites. They are distinguished from that company of Gentiles which with them is to be carried through the great tribulation.

Malachi speaks of the judgments that shall precede the advent of the Messiah. The prophet is speaking of the *second* advent, and not the first. Nothing but a violent perversion of language can make his prophecy apply literally to the first coming of Christ. It remains for future fulfillment. The Lord, preceded by His forerunner, "shall suddenly come to his temple"; he will purify the sons of Levi from iniquity, execute judgment upon the ungodly, vindicate the faithfulness of God to His promises, and bring in everlasting blessing.

The word "Malachi" means "an angel," and, at the end of his prophecy, he says: "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (MAL. 4:2). The burden of Malachi's message, according to the first verse, is to *Israel.* The rising of the "Sun of righteousness" can alone banish the darkness that has overtaken Israel. It is significant to notice that the angel, who has the seal of the liv-

ing God, ascends from the *sun-rising*. He seals upon the "foreheads" those who, by virtue of the seal, are marked out as belonging to God and sheltered from the judgment about to overtake the world. We cannot think of an *indiscriminate* sealing of the twelve thousand from each tribe. There must be a something to indicate the ones upon whom the seal is to be put. Christ speaks of them as "his elect." Election doubtless is of sovereign grace; but the fact that the angel seals upon the *forehead* suggests that the faces are turned to Him; that is, toward the *sun-rising*. The grace of God is bestowed on them that have faith in Him. The *blood* in Egypt was the sign indicating the house to be passed over by the avenging angel. The faces turned toward the *sun-rising* would mark out those to whom the angel with the seal was sent. Aaron bore the name of Jehovah upon his *frontlet;* but the names of the children of Israel were upon his breastplate.

"Deep in the heart lies the secret of faith." The faces turned toward the east would testify to, and be a confession of, the faith in the heart. An Israelite *indeed* is one, as Jesus says of Nathanael, "in whom is no guile." He is one who through all reverses, and under every trial, believes in God and His ability to keep all His promises, and looks trustfully forward to the accomplishment of all His purposes. He is one who fears the name of Jehovah, and with longing expectation looks for the manifestation of Jehovah's power and glory. Upon him "the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings." Faith will turn the face toward the place of expected deliverance, and the angel of the *sun-rise* will show how Nathanael answers to his name—the gift of God. This company of the sealed shall be God's gift to His Son. Grace will respond to the faith that looks to Him for blessing.

Israel, scattered to the four corners of the earth, may be regarded as "the lost tribes," but they are not lost to *Him* who came to seek and *find* them. In one of His parables Jesus says: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in the field, which a man having found, hath hid, and for joy thereof goeth

and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (MATT. 13:44. Gr.). It is indeed difficult, though some seem to find it easy, to make anything other than Israel out of this treasure which was found and "hid in the field." Long ago God promised Israel that if they would keep His covenant, they should be a peculiar treasure unto Him above all people, and the Psalmist bears witness to the same truth when he says: "The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure" (Ps. 135:4). When Christ came to the world, this treasure was in it; and the glorious Seeker, having found it, "hid it": then, with His own precious blood, He purchased the field where He shall yet make a display of the glory of His grace in the unearthing of the treasure. An elect number from these tribes of Israel insures this display of glory.

It is to be noticed that none are sealed from the tribes of Dan and Ephraim. In the original enumeration of the tribes, Joseph gets "the double portion," and is represented by his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. This makes thirteen, but Levi is not counted, for his portion was among the other tribes. Omitting Joseph and Levi, and adding Ephraim and Manasseh, the number of the tribes remained twelve. In the list of the sealed ones appear the names of Joseph and Levi: Ephraim is omitted, and Dan is supplanted by Manasseh. If we knew more about Israel's wanderings, and their future position among the nations when the Lord comes to claim them, this "promiscuous enumeration," instead of "obliterating every semblance of a legal prerogative," might reveal a most surprising conformity to the many Old Testament prophecies concerning them. That Dan should be omitted on the supposed ground that antichrist springs from his tribe, would be as objectionable as giving Judah a place after the rejection of Christ. Jacob's prophecy, however enigmatic, says plainly that "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel." When the tribes are restored to the land, Dan shall be among them. In the final distribution of the land foretold by Ezekiel, Dan is first in the enumera-

tion of the tribes, and Ephraim also is given a portion. On the gates of the city are written the names of the tribal heads of the original twelve. Joseph and Levi take the place of Ephraim and Manasseh. What we have here is an especial *election of grace* for preservation through the great tribulation. Dan's connection in Jacob's prophecy with the *serpent* may be more than an intimation that his heart is thoroughly estranged from God. His face is *not* turned toward "the sun-rise" in expectant hope of help from that quarter.

It is interesting to notice that in the liturgy of the church of England, on the Sunday before Advent, the clergy are enjoined to read these words: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land" (JER. 23:5-8). This is *literal* Scripture, written long after Israel was banished from the land; and the English church, as wide as the English tongue by an overruling providence, must listen to this plain promise of the restoration of all Israel *on the Sunday next before Advent.* To hold to this, whatever it involves, is to be loyal to the unambiguous language of Scripture.

The belief in a *literal* Israel, to be owned and blessed of God in the latter days, would deliver us from the mental confusion that is involved in the unscriptural thought of the Church being a "spiritual Israel," and heir to promises that are expressed in terms that by no possibility could apply to her. No wonder the Bible is misunderstood when such a perspicuous prophecy as we have just read is "spiritualized" away.

Only let it speak to us, as we let other books, and our hearts will awaken, and respond to the glorious truths it reveals.

Israel and the Church are not *one;* and Scripture language cannot be forced into any acknowledgment of their identity. They are distinct in the plan and purpose of God. The Church seems to have lost all consciousness of her heavenly blessing, and this claiming by her of the earthly blessings promised to Israel has wrought on all hands confusion of thought from which there would seem to be no possibility of escape. In fact there *is* no escape, except by an honest return to, and sincere belief in, the unambiguous language of God's Word.

In this sealed company from the twelve tribes *Israel* is, whatever may be said to the contrary, plainly and literally before us. To assert that Israel is not intended is to make language mean anything man may choose to make it. In the national rejection of Israel the purposes of God have not been defeated. He is competent to perform that to which He has pledged Himself. The setting aside of Israel makes room for the Church, and at the same time develops a purpose of which the Old Testament says nothing. Israel is not gone from the earth, but preserved in it for future blessing. To this fact all the prophets testify, and any other interpretation of their writings makes them utterly unintelligible. The Son of God has been banished from this world; but back to the world He is coming and coming to *reign over it.* Israel also is coming back to the land, to be established there under the glorious rule of the Messiah. These sealed ones of our chapter pass through this time of tribulation that precedes His coming and then they greet Him with the glad cry: "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." This glad cry shall be to all the world the soul-inspiring witness of God's immutable faithfulness. Hosanna in the highest!

XV

EARTH'S JUDGMENT-SALVATION

After these things I saw, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and tribe and people and tongue, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palm branches in their hands. And they cry with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. And all the angels stood round the throne and the elders and the four living beings, and fell before the throne upon their faces and worshiped God, saying, Amen; blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and strength, unto our God, to the ages of ages. Amen. And one of the elders answered saying unto me, These who are clothed in white robes, who are they? And whence came they? And I said unto him, My lord, Thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth upon the throne shall tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun in any wise fall upon them nor any burning heat; because the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall tend them, and shall lead them to fountains of waters of life, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.—(Chapter 7:9-17.)

IN contrast with the sealed of Israel this vision brings before us another company that is viewed as having passed through "the great tribulation." The interpreters that object to the restoration of a literal Israel are here as elsewhere in hopeless confusion. They not only differ among themselves, but they refuse the decisive voice that says: "These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

This defines them in a way so positive as to preclude, one should think, any possibility of mistake. This mistake is never-

theless made by all interpreters that have lost sight of God's purpose of restoration for the earth. It may seem like assumption to part company with so many trusted commentators, but how can we go on with them while they only add confusion to confusion, and darken their own counsels by conflicting tongues? They tell us that this company is composed of "individuals of all ages,—ante- as well as post-diluvian, and constitutes the whole body of the redeemed." They tell us that the elders upon the thrones are the "glorified Church"; then, that the one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed of Israel constitute the "glorified Church"; and now, that this company that comes out of great tribulation is again the "glorified Church." The one vision before their eyes is, ever and always, the Church. But God's Word is broader and deeper than any such measure of man's mind. This Word is not exhausted when the Church comes into view. The great center, around which all else revolves, is not the Church, but THE SON OF GOD. "All things were created by *him,* and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (COL. 1:16-17). The eternal purposes evolve ever in connection with Him. In their different spheres, principalities and powers, the restoration of the earth, Israel, and the Church, pay tribute to His glory. This multitude that comes out of the great tribulation cannot be the Church; for the Church is enthroned in heaven before the tribulation begins. Nor can this multitude, by any possibility, be contracted into the *definite* number of the sealed, spoken of in the first vision. The elder tells us that they come out of "great tribulation"—the text is literally "*the* tribulation, *the* great one."

Speaking of the great Roman oppression of his people in the last days, Daniel says: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (DAN. 12:1).

To this tribulation our Lord undoubtedly refers when He says: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (MATT. 24:21). This time of trouble is still future, and cannot be conceived of as extending through these Christian generations, for Jesus says: "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (MATT. 24:22).

They that claim this tribulation to be past can find a refutation of their theory in the further words of Jesus: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (MATT. 24:29-31).

Revelation is in full harmony with this. The angels stand at the four corners of the earth, restraining the winds until the elect of Christ are gathered. Then the tribulation, the great one, mentioned in the book of Daniel and referred to by our Lord, follows, and this innumerable company is spoken of as having passed through it. It is mainly composed of Gentiles, for it is "out of every nation and tribe and people and tongue." The great tribulation is not merely Jacob's trouble. The famine smites Egypt before it reaches Canaan. The time has come for the execution of divine judgment upon the whole world. To the four corners of the earth that judgment shall roll and purge the world of its iniquity.

There is nothing grander in the literature of the world than the inspired predictions of that coming judgment. "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jeru-

salem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle" (ZECH. 14:1-3).

Another prophet says: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord" (Is. 2:2-5).

Still another says: "Behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land" (JOEL 3:1-2).

Prophecy after prophecy of like tenor testifies to this coming day when the judgments of God shall be poured out upon this apostate earth. The utter ruin of man, and the judgment that shall overtake the earth, is the theme also of many of the Psalms.

In the ninety-fourth Psalm we have the judgment-salvation of the earth. There is an appeal to the God of vengeance to shine forth. It shall indeed be the shining forth of the lightning flash; but God shall be revealed in it; for He is *Light*. The cry goes up for the Judge of the earth to render up a recom-

pense unto the proud. It is the pride of man that makes necessary his abasement.

"The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (Is. 2: 12-15, 17).

This great tribulation, then, that is yet future, is not merely for the restoration of Israel, but for the purpose of purging the earth of its uncleanness. We are told elsewhere, that when the judgments of the Lord are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Through that blinding storm a saved remnant of Israel shall pass; and, under the mighty strokes of divine judgment, the Gentile nations shall be awakened from their idolatry, and shall turn to God and live. The fruit of this judgment, in its Gentile aspect, is seen in the "great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and tribe and people and tongue, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." "Standing before the throne" might seem to indicate their being in heaven—and this is the common thought—but this idea is shown to be incorrect by the words of the elder who says, they are "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth upon the throne shall tabernacle over them." There is no *night* in heaven, nor is there any temple therein. In the vision before us day and night succeed each other as they do now. This will not be altered during the Millennial reign. The restoration of Israel involves also the restoration of the temple. Interpreters have protested against such literalism as beneath the dignity of Christ. But let us ask, Is it any dishonor for God to sweep the mosque of Omar from the place where His temple once

stood, and more than restore the glory of the first temple? Is it any dishonor to Christ if He be crowned the *King of all Israel* by the same nation that nailed Him to His cross of shame? Did God fail in His first intentions? And is He incompetent to carry out purposes that have been in His heart from the beginning? Shall the Church displace Israel altogether from the heart of God? Paul says: "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (ROM. 9:3-5). Is Paul speaking of the Church in this passage? No, he is speaking of the *Israelites, his kinsmen according to the flesh,* to whom pertain not only "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God," but also *the promises.* These promises are all to be redeemed to them when "angel hands" shall bring them back from the four corners of the earth to which they have been driven by the righteous judgment of God.

The Gentiles, seen here in association with them, and connected with the temple service, are spoken of by the prophets.

Isaiah says: "They shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord" (Is. 66:19-21). According to this prophecy the Gentiles are not only instrumental in the restoration of Israel, but they are also chosen of God to minister as priests in the restored temple. The sanctuary-throne of Israel

is to be reëstablished upon earth, and this Gentile multitude is seen standing before *that* throne.

Nothing is said of resurrection, nor any hint given of their having come out of death at all. They are spoken of as having come out of the great tribulation. In contrast with the martyrs slain, they *live* through it. The white robes in which they are clothed testify to their acceptance by God, and the palm branches speak of the Feast of Tabernacles in which, though Gentiles, they are to have a part.

These Gentiles surviving the tribulation, and approved of at the judgment seat of Christ, are the subjects of His kingdom on *earth*. For this, death and resurrection are not necessary. They are not even *implied*. The common thought—but much less common than formerly—of a general resurrection and final judgment of saints and sinners alike at the end of the world, cannot be sustained by Scripture. Such a theory hopelessly confuses all prophecy. This confusion would never have existed had not commentators lost God's thought about Israel.

Scripture is clear and decisive about the resurrection of believers in Christ. They are raised when He comes to accomplish the restoration of Israel and receive His coronation. The interval between His appearing, when the saints are raised, and His actual return to the earth, is the time of the world's sore judgment; from which believers in Christ whether living or dead escape. Israel and the nations pass through it. This multitude has, through these judgments, "learned righteousness." The people that compose it do not die, but pass through the tribulation, and they "cry with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb." This is not the song of redemption; it is the *cry* of salvation from judgment.

This same multitude appears in the judgment scene that inaugurates the kingdom. Jesus says: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him

shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (MATT. 25:31-46).

This is not the last judgment, nor is anything said of resurrection preceding it. It is a judgment of "the Son of man" when He comes in glory. This coming, as we have seen, is "*immediately* after the tribulation." Christ is the Judge of "the quick and the dead"; but here He is judging the living, and not the dead. The dead in Christ are resurrected prior to

this, and do not come into this judgment nor into any other. They are manifested here; for they come with Christ in glory. During the tribulation days Israel is the central figure throughout. After the Church is taken from the earth Israel, reinstated, is the representative of Christ. These Israelites are His *brethren,* and judgment is based on the treatment given to them. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

The glory of Israel shall be revealed to the Gentiles during this time of trouble. God shall make Himself known through Israel, and the Gentiles shall have their hearts turned to Him; and He shall have compassion upon them. They shall come out of the "great tribulation," and share with Israel in the reign of the Messiah.

The elder says: "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." These robes are not that robe of Christ's righteousness in which the penitent sinner finds acceptance with God. That needs no washing to make it white. The "white robes" worn by the multitude convey another thought altogether. In the nineteenth chapter a company is seen, as the bride of Christ, "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white," and we are told "the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints." *The righteousnesses of the saints* is a very different thing from the righteousness of Christ. The tribulation saints are judged according to their *deeds,* as are all others that come at all into judgment. The Church does not come into judgment, but is already "passed from death into life."

Men that refuse the grace of Christ are judged "according to their works." This is stated explicitly by the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans. (ROM. 2:6). This, also, is the basis on which are judged all that come before the "great white throne" (REV. 20:12).

When the day of grace comes to an end, and the Church is taken from the earth, all that remain pass into the tribulation, and shall either die during it, or if they survive to the end,

shall be judged according to their works. This is plainly declared in Isaiah and in this book. (Is. 59:18. REV. 22:14). The "deeds done in the body," whether good or bad, are alike known to God. Both the good and the evil shall be recompensed. In Deuteronomy Jehovah declares: "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste" (DEUT. 32:35).

The judgment scene in the twenty-fifth of Matthew introduces the Millennial kingdom of Christ, and title to entrance is based on *deeds done*. Even these get value through cleansing in the blood. By virtue of this blood the doers of these deeds are approved and accepted. They stand on His right hand, and enter with Him into the glory of His Millennial reign over the earth.

In the Gospels four titles are given to Jesus. He is the Son of David; the Son of Abraham; the Son of Man; and the Son of God. As the Son of David, He has title to the throne of David; as the Son of Abraham, He has title to the land; as the Son of Man, He has title to the world; as the Son of God, He is the heir of all things. Of these four titles three are made good when He enters upon His Millennial reign. As the Son of David, He ascends the throne of Israel; as the Son of Abraham, He takes possession of the land promised to Abraham; as the Son of Man, the whole habitable earth is put under Him. His title as the Son of God abides throughout, and shall be made manifest to all when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God the Father, "that God may be all in all."

During His Millennial reign the whole earth responds to the glory of His presence. Of this the prophets give ample assurance. Isaiah speaks of it when he says: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excel-

lency of our God" (Is. 35:1-2). Under the government of the Prince of Peace, even the wild beasts of the forest shall be changed in nature, so that the wolf "shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Is. 11:6).

The same glorious truth is testified to by other prophets. Jeremiah says: "Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things. For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God" (JER. 31:4-6).

Prophesying of the glory of this same time, Ezekiel says: "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing" (EZEK. 34:23-26).

Again this same prophet says: "This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it" (EZEK. 36:35-36).

This coming day is seen by Amos, who says: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and

the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God" (AMOS 9:13-15).

Speaking of the effect of Christ's presence upon the Gentiles, Micah says: "They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee" (MICAH 7:17).

Zephaniah rings out the same triumphant note when he says: "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (ZEPH. 3:14-17). Again he says: "Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord" (ZEPH. 3:19-20).

Finally Zechariah declares: "It shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light" (ZECH. 14:6-7). The light shall not "be clear, nor

dark"; that is, brightness in one place, and gloom in another; but, throughout the entire extent of the earth, the light of His glory shall be equally diffused; and, differing from all other days gone before, it shall come to pass that at evening time, instead of darkness, *there shall be light.* The evening of that day is the dawn of another: and night shall be no more.

These and many other luminous passages from the Old Testament prophecies show how wondrously the whole creation shall respond to the presence of her King. The ninety-eighth Psalm gives us the full-throated song of the whole creation. It is the song of *Israel* first; then all the inhabitants of the earth are heard joining in it. The sounding trumpets announce the presence of the King; the voice of praise throbs through the earth until the sea roars, and the fullness thereof; the floods clap their hands, and the hills sing for joy together before Jehovah; for He is come to judge the earth: and He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with equity. Such are the inspired ascriptions of praise that shall fill the world when the curse has been repealed, and Christ is once more upon the scene. The words are too definite in their application to allow the Church the full inheritance of them. However glorious they be in reference to the redemption of the earth, they are surpassed by the far more exceeding glories foretold of the Church. Paul says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (EPH. 1:3-4).

The blessings promised to the Church are not *earthly,* but heavenly, and are fulfilled to her in the heavenly places where Christ now is. When He appears, the Church "shall also appear with him in glory." She is to be with *the King* when He takes His crown. In John's vision the angels are seen, standing "round the throne and the elders and the four living beings." The angels encircle not only the throne, but also the

Church and the cherubim. This exceeds in glory anything to be found upon the earth.

The dwellers on earth are in a lower sphere, which is, however, glorified by an administration of absolute righteousness. Such a government this world has never yet seen, and it never shall be seen until God's anointed King shall take unto Him His great power and reign. Throughout the reign of Christ, Satan shall be bound, and the inhabitants of the earth "shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun in any wise fall upon them nor any burning heat, because the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall tend them, and shall lead them to fountains of waters of life, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."

These blessings are the theme of many an Old Testament prophet. Isaiah says: "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away" (Is. 51:11).

Again he says: "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Is. 25:6-9). In another place, he says: "Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall

feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them" (Is. 49: 8-10).

In the long delay of the centuries men have lost heart, but the purposes of God flow steadily on to the restoration of the earth, and a reign of absolute righteousness over it. The delay may seem tedious to us, but we must remember that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Our unbelief can neither dethrone God, nor annul His decrees. He has spoken, and His word shall not return to Him void.

In a world like this the ideals we cherish vanish away. We are conscious of disorder extending throughout nature's entire domain. Man is a fallen creature, and there is no power save that of a Sovereign God to lift him out of the estate into which he has come. The problem is not too great for God, nor will He exhaust His wisdom in solving it. He proclaims Himself the Imperial God. He counsels with none, and permits no other to enter into competition with Him. Whenever he revealed His power in the past, it was in the execution of judgment against sin, or upon the gods of the heathen. He has not withdrawn into the silence forever. He is a God of grace, though sovereign, and His grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. With Him the wisdom of the world must of necessity be foolishness. He has taken no man to be His counselor. It was written of old, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness"; and again, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." It is folly to resist Him. Let us rather plead with Him to have His own way with us, and then all things shall be ours "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come"; all are ours; and we are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

Throughout the entire range of their prophecies there is

for Israel nothing like this; and yet even for them there awaits a glory which their most evangelical prophet could not express except in the cry: "Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him" (Is. 64:4). This is as far as Israel can go. But when the Church receives as her Lord Israel's rejected King, she lays hold of this Old Testament prophecy, and making it her own, turns the cry into a song: "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 COR. 2:9-10).

XVI

THE SOUNDING OF THE JUBILEE HORNS

And when he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and much incense was given to him that he might add it to the prayers of all saints at the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints, out of the hand of the angel before God. And the angel took the censer, and filled it from the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and there were voices, and thunders and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. And the first sounded, and there was hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth; and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea which had life died; and the third part of the ships was destroyed. And the third angel sounded, and there fell out of heaven a great star, burning as a lamp; and it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the springs of waters. And the name of the star is called, Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many of the men died of the waters because they were made bitter. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars, so that the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for its third part, and the night likewise. And I saw, and I heard one eagle flying in mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to those that dwell upon the earth, by reason of the rest of the trumpet-voices of the three angels which are about to sound.—(Chapter 8.)

THE sounding of the seven trumpets introduces another series of seven successional judgments which constitute and characterize "the great tribulation." When the seventh trumpet sounds, the rebellion of the world is over, and "great voices" are heard in heaven, saying, "The world-kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ has come,

and he shall reign unto the ages of ages." The first trumpet begins the tribulation that eventuates in this.

A Roman prince, as we have already seen, is to make a covenant with Israel for the last week of their prophetic history. In the middle of the week he violates the covenant, and causes the sacrifice and oblation in the Jewish temple to cease. This setting aside of the daily sacrifice is immediately followed by the appearance of a "desolater," who is said to come on "the wing of abominations."

The gods, or idols of the heathen, are spoken of as "abominations." Milcom, or Molech, was the abomination of the Ammonites; Chemosh, the abomination of Moab. (1 KINGS 11: 5-7). This interprets the "abomination," spoken of by Daniel, as nothing other than an idol or false god. In the midst of the week, when the sacrifice and oblation have been set aside, a "desolater" appears, who sets up such an idol or false god in the temple of Jehovah.

Paul says, "the day of the Lord" will not be, "except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God" (2 THESS. 2: 3-4. R. V.). The apostle refers to antichrist who, before the coming of Christ, shall be set up by an image or otherwise in the temple of God as the supreme object of adoration and worship. This will be, without doubt, the "abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel. Jesus, in His prophecy on the Mount of Olives, tells us that the tribulation shall begin when this abomination of desolation is seen standing in the holy place. The length of this period is so definitely marked, both in Daniel and in Revelation, that there ought to be no possibility of mistake about it. Speaking of the imperial head of revived Rome, Daniel says: "He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High: and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and

times and half a time" (DAN. 7:25. R. V.). This same prophet, in reference to the tribulation period, hears one asking, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" In answer to this, Daniel says: "I heard the man clothed in linen, which was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth forever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished" (DAN. 12:7). This gives us the exact duration of the interval between the setting up of the "abomination" and the coming of the Son of man in glory. It is the second half of Daniel's prophetic week. A "time, times, and a half a time"; corresponding to a year, two years, and a half a year. The length of this period is stated in the book we are studying just as definitely.

The two witnesses prophesy "a thousand two hundred and three score days" (REV. 11:3). But a thousand two hundred and three score days make forty-two months—according to the Jewish reckoning of thirty days to a month—and forty-two months are three years and a half. Again in the eleventh chapter instructions are given not to measure the court without the temple; "because it is given to the Gentiles; and the holy city shall they tread under foot *forty and two months*" (REV. 11:2). Here we have the same definite period of three years and a half.

In the twelfth chapter we are told that the woman escapes from the dragon, and is nourished in the wilderness "for a time, times, and a half a time" (REV. 12:14). It is the same period, a year, two years, and a half a year.

Concerning the beast, it is said: "There was given to him authority to practice forty and two months" (REV. 13:5).

The final week of the Jewish age is divided into two equal periods, and the great tribulation extends through the second period of three years and a half. It begins when the holy place is profaned, and divine honor paid to antichrist. The

breaking of the seventh seal, which is followed by the sounding of the trumpets, brings us, therefore, to the middle of the week, and to the beginning of "the great tribulation."

Remembering what is taking place on earth, where God is being defied in the restored sanctuary, there should be little wonder at the silence in heaven for the space of about half an hour. Heaven itself is dumb in the face of this fearful and final revolt against God. The silence is not to be accounted for by anything found in the old forms of Jewish worship such as the silence maintained by the people when the high priest went in before God. What takes place here is in heaven; not on earth. It is the silence of the heavenly host, amazed at the daring profanity of man in desecrating the holy place where God had reëstablished His glory. All heaven is breathless when man on earth, in the delirium of demon excitement, gives this challenge to Almighty God. The silence is brief. It is the lull before the roaring storm that shall sweep the enemies of Jehovah before Him.

Seven angels are seen, "standing before God," and seven trumpets are given them. These are not merely war trumpets; they are also "horns of jubilee," such as were blown when the walls of Jericho fell. They peal louder and louder until the walls of empires fall, and Israel and the whole creation enter the Jubilee of God. They announce the ending of the great Day of Atonement; the High Priest, who has gone in, is about to come forth; and this will wind up the "Jewish age." It is the "day of vengeance" of our God; but it ushers in the glorious Jubilee. It means the judgment and collapse of the world-powers, and the introduction of the kingdom of the Son of man.

Before the trumpets are blown, an angel is seen, standing at the altar, "having a golden censer; and much incense was given to him that he might add it to the prayers of all saints at the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints, out of the hand of the angel before God."

Commentators are in general agreement that this "angel" can refer to none other than to Christ. The prayers of the saints on earth are perfected by the incense that He burns on the golden altar. No mere angel, and much less a saint, could give efficacy to prayer. The incense used in the tabernacle services was compounded of spices, and was most holy. Burning with fire taken from the altar of burnt offering, it wrapped the high priest in a great volume of smoke as he entered the most holy place on the great Day of Atonement. The *blood* made atonement; and the "sweet odor" of the incense bore witness to the value of that atonement in the sight of God. It is the accomplished work of Christ which gives value to the prayers of the saints on earth. Christ appears here in His Old Testament relation to the people of Israel as "the angel of the covenant." In the seventy-fourth Psalm there is a prophetic prayer for the violated sanctuary. "Thine adversaries roar in the midst of thy place of assembly: they set up their signs as signs" (Ps. 74:4). Delitzsch has shown that the "insignia" of the common version are not to be taken as a military sign, but as *heathen signs* such as were thrust into the temple in the times of the Maccabees, and, more particularly, "the abomination of desolation." Then the cry goes up to God for vengeance, and efficacy is given to this prayer by the offered incense. The incense testifies to the finished and accepted work of Christ in their behalf. The altar of burnt offering from which the fire is taken speaks of the death of Christ. By that death we are either saved or condemned. The apostle Paul says: "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life" (2 COR. 2:15-16).

The gospel of Christ is indeed the savor of death unto death to them that reject Him. If the fire of the burnt offering does not avail for man before God, it will give efficacy to the cry of vengeance which rises against him. When cast upon the earth, where the rejecters of Christ are, there follow

" voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake." The trumpets are about to sound. The long-suffering patience of Christ is over, and the penetrating fire shall search out His enemies. The pouring of the fire upon earth shows the cup of the world's iniquity to be full; and now the world must drain that cup to its bitter dregs.

" The seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. And the first sounded, and there was hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth; and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up."

Before looking in detail at the judgments brought in by the trumpets, let us keep in mind the fact that these judgments carry us on *to the end.* Whatever follows in the book is not, therefore, a continuance, as if following the trumpets, but is rather a detailed delineation of things in vital relation to them. The language used to set forth the trumpet-judgments is apparently symbolic throughout. Literal, natural phenomena, such as is expressed by the terms employed, are certainly not intended. The symbol, however, may at times approximate very closely to the literal thing signified. So far as possible, with what help other Scripture may give us, we should aim to get a conception of the thing signified, rather than to be too much occupied with the symbols themselves.

When the first angel sounds, there is a storm of " hail and fire mingled with blood." This affects a third part of the earth, and burns up a third part of the trees, and all of the grass. In the first place we need to remember that the earth here spoken of is not necessarily the whole globe. The earth, naturally enough, speaks of Israel. The prophecies concerning Israel and the earth are so definite and clear, that we can locate with absolute certainty the sphere of the first four trumpet-judgments. The issues of prophecy are definite both as to *time* and *place.* We may not be able to give any of the details of the prophetic judgments that shall accomplish the over-

throw of the world-empires, but we can define the extent of their duration, and locate with absolute certainty the storm-center. While prophecy plainly declares that the whole world is on the way to restoration, it at the same time defines clearly the particular part of the earth where this restoration shall be wrought out.

Daniel's vision of the Gentile supremacy carries us to the end of the Jewish age during which everlasting righteousness is to be brought in. The fourth kingdom of which Daniel speaks is, by the common consent of all commentators, the Roman empire. Daniel says: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (DAN. 7:13-14). These words apply to the time of the fourth kingdom. The Roman empire must therefore be in existence when the Son of man comes, and it is no more difficult to conceive of the revival of that empire than it is to conceive of the revival of Israel. Without such a revival no fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy, nor of Revelation either, can be possible.

That empire, with Israel once more under its iron heel, defines the field for the fulfillment of prophecy. The extent of the Roman empire during the last days will come more definitely before us in the consideration of the thirteenth chapter. Whatever partial fulfillment may be found in history for these trumpet-judgments, it is perfectly manifest that the complete and final fulfillment can only be in the last days, and in immediate connection with the events that are related to Israel's restoration and blessing.

The judgment following the first trumpet smites the earth but only extends to a "third part."

This reserve of a "third part" for judgment may speak of

some special claim of God to it. Out of the days of the week God reserved one for Himself; out of the nations of mankind He reserved one for Himself, and of the earth He has also reserved for Himself that portion of it in which Israel was established, and which is spoken of as "Immanuel's land." May this not be the "third part" smitten in order to Israel's deliverance?

The storm is similar to one that overwhelmed the realm of Pharaoh, when Jehovah was pleading with him to allow His people Israel to depart. "Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation" (Ex. 9:23-24). That storm in Egypt was one in a series of judgments which eventually delivered Israel from the hands of the Egyptians.

The hailstorm, spoken of in Revelation, is, manifestly, for the same blessed purpose; but it shall now accomplish Israel's full and *final* deliverance. From the storm that swept over Egypt, Goshen, the land where the Israelites dwelt, was alone exempt. In Revelation the storm smites the land where Israel dwells, and seems to be called forth by the open defiance shown in setting up the abomination of desolation in the holy place. In the deliverance under Moses, God was executing judgment upon the gods of Egypt. In the deliverance wrought out here, God shall execute judgment upon him, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 THESS. 2:4).

"Hail" and "fire" are the symbols of *cold* and *heat*. The cold may testify to the withdrawal of God, and the heat to the execution of judgment. These symbols of judgment are used in the expression: "The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hailstones and coals of fire" (Ps. 18:13). God is here seen manifesting Himself in behalf

of the One whom He has anointed and in whose exaltation is involved the blessing of the people over whom He is to be enthroned. We might infer from this, that the judgment in Revelation has in view the final and full deliverance of Israel in whose behalf it is wrought. It is of more importance to have a conception of the end in view than to know the exact way by which the end is accomplished. All of these trumpet-judgments move steadily on to effect the one purpose of bringing Christ's enemies under His feet. When the last trumpet sounds, the end is accomplished, and the Messiah is proclaimed the King.

When the second angel sounds, "as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea which had life died; and the third part of the ships was destroyed."

The *sea* is here in contrast with the *land* where the first judgment fell. If the land speaks of Israel; the sea, even more plainly, does so of the surrounding nations. In the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, where Christ in parable gives us the character His kingdom would take during His absence, the same contrast is seen. He "went out of the *house,* and sat by the *seaside.*" The "house," representing Israel, had rejected Him, and He turns to the Gentiles, represented by the sea, in order to choose out from them a company of believers in Him. The judgment of the second trumpet falls more especially upon the nations.

In Jeremiah we read: "Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain" (JER. 51: 25).

When the disciples marveled at the withering of the fig tree, "Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this *mountain,*

Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done" (MATT. 21:21). The mountain of which Jesus speaks is some mighty power opposing the establishment of His kingdom. Jeremiah and Jesus have the same thing in mind, and under the second trumpet this mountain is *cast into the sea.*

A "burning mountain" suggests volcanic forces which in their eruptive power accomplish self-destruction. The final form of world-empire development is given us in the second Psalm: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed." Peter shows us, in the application of this prophecy to Christ, how the Jew and Gentile were found in combined opposition to the Messiah. The same combination shall be manifest in the last days.

In the mountain burning with fire there is something more specific than a general world-empire. The prophecy of Jeremiah, to which we have referred, tells us that Jehovah would make *Babylon* as a burnt mountain. The prophet is unquestionably speaking of a *literal* Babylon on the Euphrates, which overshadowed and finally swept Judah and Jerusalem into captivity. In the fifty-first chapter, as well as in other places, the prophet foretells in the most solemn language the awful and certain doom of Babylon. The terms of the prophecy comprehend the utter annihilation of that city. The destruction of Babylon under Cyrus neither fulfills Old Testament prophecy, nor the eighteenth chapter of Revelation. The fall of Babylon, foretold in the eighteenth chapter, is given us by John more than five hundred years after the overthrow of the city by Cyrus. There being no city to fall, the term "Babylon" is very generally applied to the Roman empire, or perhaps more definitely to the city of Rome itself. This interpretation seems also to be justified by the terms of the seventeenth chapter in which the beast ridden by the scarlet woman is undoubtedly the literal city of Rome. A further confirmation is found in the fact of the woman being styled "*Mystery,*" Babylon. The evidence seems complete.

This is not the time to look carefully into this, as we shall need to do when we come to those chapters. It is enough to say here that the Babylon of the eighteenth chapter is not the "Mystery," Babylon of the seventeenth. The fall of Babylon is yet to be; and for this it must come into existence again. There ought to be no more difficulty in conceiving of the restoration of Babylon than in conceiving of the restoration of Rome.

When Babylon was overthrown by Cyrus there was no complete destruction; because the city remained throughout the entire reign of the Persian monarchs, and the royal courts were held there part of every year. Enormous ruins were in existence at the time of Alexander the Great. He undoubtedly intended to restore the city, but was prevented by his early death. The statement has been made, that after the death of Napoleon a plan was found among his papers for the restoration of Babylon. We shall find, as we proceed in our study, that the reconstruction of the city is a prophetic necessity. The second trumpet seems to be the first indication of its reappearance. It is not the *burnt* mountain of Jeremiah; because judgment has not yet annihilated it. It is however spoken of as "burning." The internal fires that shall consume it are there, and shall burst forth in a devouring flame, and accomplish the overthrow of this imperial seat of Satan. The reconstruction of the city has its baneful effect upon the surrounding nations. It comes into existence through terrific warfare. It is raised in a sea of blood, and affects the armies and navies of the world. Under the fifth trumpet this subject will come before us again, and Babylon will be seen to have a place of commanding importance until the final judgment falls, and like a millstone she sinks beneath the waves to rise no more.

When the third angel sounds, "a great star" is seen falling from heaven, and "burning as a lamp." The name of the star is "Wormwood," and it embitters the "rivers" and "springs of waters." The rivers and springs of water speak

of refreshment. They represent spiritually what the soul hungers for, and without which it can never be satisfied. At the well of Jacob, Jesus said to the woman of Samaria: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (JOHN 4: 13-14). Whether he knows it or not, man hungers and thirsts for *truth*: the truth of his own lost condition, and of salvation through the sovereign grace of God. This, preached in all its blessed simplicity, gives life to dying men; but more and more the ears of men are turned away from the imperial voice that alone can speak peace to them. Long ago Paul told Timothy: "That in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."

The same apostle wrote to the Thessalonians, that in the last days there should be those, who, "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," should be given over to "strong delusions, that they should believe a lie" (2 THESS. 2: 10-11).

It is only after a long and willful rejection of His grace that God would so deal with men. This literally comes to pass when the third angel sounds. "There fell out of heaven a great star." This star, not like the "star" that was the messenger to the churches, is a wicked pretense, for he is seen as "fallen from heaven." He is a false teacher. Instead of bearing witness to the truth, in all its blessed simplicity, he embitters these waters with absinthe, a strong and intoxicating draught, which turns the water of life into the instrument of death. False teachers there have been from the beginning, but they multiply faster and faster as the age darkens toward the close. The result of this shall be, that those who persist in rejecting the truth shall be given over to a strong delusion and *believe a lie*. Man's refusing of Christ's *truth* results in his becoming a believer in Satan's *lie*.

When the fourth angel sounds, the sun, moon, and stars

are smitten. Both spiritually and physically, "the heavens rule," and these lights of the firmament, the sun and moon, are spoken of as ruling lights; the one for the day, and the other for the night. Christ, as long as He was in the world, was the *light* of it. He says: "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work." The night came, and the Light of the world was quenched; but God has given us "the prophetic word confirmed, to which ye do well in taking heed (as to a lamp that shineth in an obscure place, until the day dawn and the morning star ariseth) in your hearts" (2 PET. 1:19. Gr.).

The darkening of the sun, moon and stars might naturally enough be the result of heretical and false teaching. In fact it would be the *inevitable* result. But we can scarcely think, that the fourth trumpet should merely announce the results following the first three. These lights of the firmament speak naturally also of government over the earth and yet under control of heaven. As long as man exercises power upon earth, no matter what the form of government may be, it will remain true, that "the powers that be are *ordained of God*." Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, was driven out to eat grass with the beasts of the field, until he should understand "that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." When the judgments of God smite the earth, the government then in existence, whether it be imperial Rome or imperial Babylon, shall hold only a delegated authority. God surrenders His sovereignty neither to Satan nor to man.

The judgment of the fourth trumpet smites some imperial head of empire. The restriction is again made to a third part, the third part, as we have seen, of the prophetic earth, and it may refer here to the western third of the Roman empire revived. The rider of the white horse, who appears when the first seal is broken, receives, when the fourth trumpet sounds, a deadly wound which is afterwards healed. This identifies him with the smitten imperial head already spoken

of, but the details of the subject will come before us in their proper connection.

After these four trumpets sound there is a vision of an "eagle flying in mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to those that dwell upon the earth, by reason of the rest of the trumpet-voices of the three angels which are about to sound." Jesus, it seems, must have had these woe-trumpets in mind when He said: "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (MATT. 24:28). In the seething and corrupting mass of world-empire at the close of the age is found the carcass, and the birds of prey begin to circle around in the ever-darkening clouds above it. When this awful feast is at last fully prepared, these vultures shall be summoned by an angel standing in the sun, and by him be bidden to eat what is termed in the awful language of Scripture THE SUPPER OF THE GREAT GOD.

XVII

THE ABYSS

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fallen from heaven unto the earth, and there was given unto him the key of the pit of the abyss. And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there arose a smoke out of the pit as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun was darkened, and the air, by the smoke of the pit. And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth, and there was given unto them authority as the scorpions of the earth have authority; and it was said to them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads; and it was given them that they should not kill these, but that they should be tormented five months; and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man. And in those days men shall seek death and shall in no wise find it, and shall long to die and death shall flee from them. And the likenesses of the locusts were like horses prepared for war; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men, and they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as those of lions, and they had breastplates, as it were iron breastplates; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to the battle; and they have tails like scorpions, and stings; and their authority was in their tails to hurt men five months. They have over them a king, the angel of the abyss: his name is in the Hebrew Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon. The first woe is past. Behold, there come still two woes after these things.—(Chapter 9: 1-12.)

THE woe-trumpets bring to pass the full and final development of evil introduced by the apostate star of the third. The perversion of truth through embittering the fountains of life culminates in a general apostasy. Men everywhere are given up to "seducing spirits and doctrines of demons."

The "star" of the fifth trumpet is seen, not to fall, but as already *fallen,* and there is given to him "the key of the abyss."

The Greek word, which in the common version is translated "bottomless," is literally the "abyss." It is the word used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to express the "deep" of the second verse of the first chapter of Genesis. "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the *abyss*." The legion of demons, before being cast out of the demoniac of Gadara, besought Jesus, "that he would not command them to go out into the *deep*" (LUKE 8:31). The word for "deep" in the Greek is "abyss," and it here seems to indicate a place of torment dreaded by the demons. The same word is used by Paul in the epistle to the Romans: "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above): or, Who shall descend into the *deep?* (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead)" (ROM. 10:6-7). The word translated "deep" is literally the abyss, and in this passage evidently means the place into which the *dead* are gone. The king of the demons is called the "angel of the abyss": but, before speaking of him, let us, if possible, discover what Scripture intends to convey to us by this word abyss. If, as Paul clearly intimates, this be the place of departed spirits, the question still remains, Is it the same as hades? It might also be asked, Is it the same place as "tartarus" into which the angels that sinned are cast, and "delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment"? (2 PET. 2:4).

In Greek mythology tartarus was the lower part, or the abyss of hades, where the spirits of wicked men were imprisoned and tormented. Hades, as we have already seen, was a place to which, prior to the resurrection of Christ, the disembodied spirits of all men, good and bad, were alike consigned. The righteous were separated from the evil by a great chasm. (LUKE 16:26). May not this chasm suggest that there is, in all reality, lower down than hades itself, a pit of woe to which the fallen angels are delivered? Is it not also that place of torment from which the demons besought exemption for a time?

The "beast" of the seventeenth chapter is spoken of as ascending "out of the bottomless pit," that is, out of the pit of the abyss. Satan is cast into the abyss and confined there for a thousand years during the Millennial reign of Christ. (REV. 20:3). These passages set before us the New Testament usage of the word. The corresponding Hebrew word is found more frequently and is usually translated "deep" or "depth." At the time of the deluge, "the fountains of the great *deep* were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened"; and when the flood was over, "the fountains of the *deep* and the windows of heaven were stopped" (GEN. 7:11, 8:2). Here evidently there is a distinction between "the fountains of the deep," and "the windows of heaven."

In Jacob's last prophecy Joseph is given promise of "blessings of heaven above," and "blessings of the *deep* that lieth under" (GEN. 49:25). These blessings of the deep, here spoken of as accruing to Joseph, evidently testify to the acquired glories of Christ, won by his descent into the realms of death.

Of similar import are the last words of Moses concerning Joseph: "Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the *deep* that coucheth beneath" (DEUT. 33:13). "The abyss that coucheth beneath" is again seen to come under the hand of Joseph for blessing.

In the song of Moses the word is *depth.* (EX. 15:5-8).

When the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, He said: "The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the *deep* is frozen" (JOB 38:30). The revised version gives "cohereth," as alternative of "frozen." May not the face of the abyss speak of the frowning doors of this dungeon?

In the thirty-sixth Psalm we read: "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great *deep*" (Ps. 36:6). The "deep" again is the abyss, which is nevertheless opened to the searching judgment of God.

In the misery of a soul separated from God, the Psalmist says in another place: "*Deep* calleth unto *deep* at the noise

of thy waterspouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (Ps. 42:7). It is the same ominous word,—abyss.

In Psalm 135:6 we read: "Whatsoever the LORD pleased that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places"—literally, "all places of the abyss." Here there is evidently a distinction between the sea, and that which lies deeper than the sea.*

In the final summons to praise Jehovah, found in the one hundred and forty-eighth Psalm, response is demanded not only from "the earth"; but from "the dragons, and all *deeps.*"

In the eighth chapter of Proverbs, which manifestly enough refers to Christ, we read: "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no *depths,* I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the *depth:* when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the *deep:* when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men" (PROV. 8:23-31). In this passage we again have the abyss in contrast with the sea.

In two places in Isaiah, (51:10 and 63:13), the prophet appears to use the word exclusively of the sea.

In his prophecy of the fall of Tyrus Ezekiel says: "Thus saith the Lord God; When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the

* In Prov. 3:20; Ps. 78:15, 104:6, 106:9, and 107:26, the sea alone seems to be intended.

deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee; when I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited; and I shall set glory in the land of the living" (EZEK. 26:19-20). Here the abyss, and the "great waters" are in contrast, and the dungeon into which Satan is to be cast is once more before us. Again this same prophet, speaking of the grim figure of the "Assyrian" that is to have so prominent a place in the last days, says: "The waters made him great, the *deep* set him up on high" (EZEK. 31:4). Here again the waters, and the abyss, are not the same. The nations of the earth combine with the dwellers in the abyss to make the Assyrian great. Though thus raised up, he shall be blasted, as the prophet assures us, and "cast down to hell with them that descend into the pit" (EZEK. 31:16).

Amos speaks of the fires of judgment devouring the great *deep*. (AMOS. 7:4).

In the glorious vision of Habakkuk, where the coming of the Lord is put before us, the prophet says: "The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the *deep* uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high" (HAB. 3:10). Everything is seen to bow to him, "of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth"; even the abyss itself, lifting up its voice, and extending its hands to God.

These appear to be all the Old Testament passages in which the Hebrew word corresponding to the Greek word "abyss" is found. Taking them together we may assume with reasonable confidence that they speak generally of a dungeon, or prison of God.

Isaiah says: "The Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and

after many days shall they be visited" (Is. 24:21-22). The "pit" is plainly a lower part, or dungeon of the abyss, into which Satan and his allies are to be cast to await their judgment at the close of the Millennium.

"Hades," or "sheol," is that compartment of the abyss to which are consigned the disembodied spirits of the wicked dead. The "pit" is apparently a deeper dungeon where the rebel angels are confined. The word "abyss" is the more comprehensive term, indicating the whole region of the lost from which, as already noted, the demons, in the days of our Lord, besought exemption until the fixed time of their torment. The fallen angels, confined somewhere in it, are fettered with "chains of darkness"; from which there shall be no escape until the time of their final doom. Satan is not there yet. Demons, though not all of them, are there: and the pit in which they are confined is opened by "the fallen star" in order to give them temporary freedom.

When the door opens, smoke, "as the smoke of a great furnace," rolls from the mouth of the pit, and obscures the sun and the air; and out of the smoke there comes forth a great army of "locusts"; and there is given to them authority "as the scorpions of the earth have authority." And they have power to "hurt men," excepting such as have "the seal of God upon their foreheads." We do not need, as some, to think that this means a literal opening of "hades," or "sheol," out of which pour forth upon earth the spirits of lost men. The "locusts" do not come out of "hades," or "sheol," but from the "pit," and these are different localities in the "abyss." Confusion is wrought by the common thought that demons are "the souls of dead men, particularly the spirits of those who bore a bad character in this life." This view is erroneous; because in Scripture the spirits of the dead are spoken of in a way to imply their removal altogether from the sphere of earth, and they are judged according to deeds "done in the body," not *out* of it. Demons are neither restricted in this way, nor judged after the same manner. The smoke comes

from the pit, and the locusts that issue are demons delivered from prison, and they are loosed to give effect to the words: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits, and teachings of demons" (1 TIM. 4:1 Gr.). Demons are commonly spoken of as "disembodied spirits of wicked men," that is, of men as we know them—without taking into consideration the possibility of another race of men existing before Adam. This opinion is open to a serious objection which a careful examination of Scripture seems to confirm. The word "demon" is not found, either in the English version of the Old Testament, or of the New. The word, in Hebrew and Greek both, that means demon has been translated "devil," or "devils," and this has necessarily obscured the true meaning. The subject is altogether too serious to be passed over lightly. If, in addition to other powers opposed to him, man is subject to an outbreak of demons, he should seek to know what the Scripture has to say about them.

"By him," that is Christ, "were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (COL. 1:16). That these thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers are not to be limited to government over the earth is manifest from another statement found in the epistle to the Ephesians where it says: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (EPH. 6:12). Here is something altogether apart from flesh and blood, and in awful opposition to us. Whatever these principalities and powers may refer to, they are not merely over the earth, but are connected with Satan and his angels, who are *rulers* of "the darkness of this world." "Spiritual wickedness in high places" should be translated—as the margin gives it—"wicked spirits in the heavenlies."

Is it not possible that these "wicked spirits" may be the

demons of which Scripture speaks? When we come to examine the passages where the word is found, we shall see that they are always spoken of as "wicked" or "unclean spirits." Their access to the heavenly places presents no greater difficulty than that of Satan's being there. They are certainly not the disembodied spirits of wicked men, because the latter are in "sheol," or "hades," and not in heavenly places. That the evil spirits in heavenly places are of those that have survived the wreck of a preadamite earth is the only theory that seems to have any evidence whatever to support it. Satan, together with fallen principalities and powers, is certainly in revolt against God. Scripture is clear as to this and also as to the fact that Satan is the *prince* of the *demons*, and this implies that they also, while subordinate to himself, are involved in his rebellion.

Peter speaks of a water-judgment that can hardly be referred to as the deluge of Noah. He says: "By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (2 PET. 3:5-6). What does he mean when he says, "The world that *then* was, being overflowed with water, perished"? It must be perfectly evident that the heaven and the earth which are *now*, and which the apostle speaks of in contrast with the world that then was, not only survived the deluge of Noah, but are also, as the apostle affirms, "kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 PET. 3:7). Science has for a long time arrayed itself against any attempt at biblical chronology. It is just as positive also against any universal flood in the time of Noah. But is it not possible that there was a flood antecedent to the days of Noah, by which, as Peter affirms, the world that then was actually perished? If this theory can be proved, then Scripture will make to science a larger contribution than science has ever made to Scripture. It is absolutely certain that the second verse of the first chapter of Genesis speaks of a shoreless sea

over which a pall of darkness hangs. Now "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen *were not made* of things which do appear" (HEB. 11:3). This declaration sweeps back to the beginning; before that awful darkness lay upon the face of the deep. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." By the word of His mouth they came into being and "the morning stars sang together." All was perfect, for all was the work of an all-wise and holy God. Thrones, and dominions, principalities, and powers were also brought into existence by the same authoritative word. But thrones and dominions involve *subjects* over whom rule has been established. The apostle speaks of our conflict with principalities, and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and wicked spirits in heavenly places, and this implies that one (or more) of these original principalities and powers have been blasted by Almighty God and are now arrayed in rebellion against Him and His people. Let it be granted that the original earth were the scene of this jurisdiction and rebellion, and Scripture shall no longer be chargeable with contradicting any proved fact of science. The second verse of the first chapter of Genesis may read, and correctly so: "The earth became *to-hoo* and *bo-hoo,*" that is, *desolate* and *empty,* "and darkness was upon the face of the deep."

The world that *then* was, perished; the world that *now* is, is the restoration of that ruin. Such an hypothesis makes possible the suggestion that the disembodied spirits of preadamite men and women, together with the rebel angels, and Satan over all, constitute the spiritual hosts of evil against which we are called upon to contend. Beneath the roaring flood that caused the ruin of the original earth God may have established a prison house for such rebels, and, for aught we know, the ocean bed may be the bar of this pit. That some of these spirits have been consigned there already is clearly evident from the Scripture; while it is equally evident that many more, including Satan, are yet at liberty. From the evil, which even now is

manifest around us, we can perhaps form some little estimate of the awful afflictions that shall overtake the world when the door of the pit is opened, and the locust host now confined there shall swarm forth. Demons were certainly at liberty and upon earth during the days of our Lord, and if they are identical with "the wicked spirits in the heavenly places," they are at liberty still. They are everywhere spoken of in the New Testament as "unclean spirits." They are the subjects of Satan who is spoken of as their "prince."

The Pharisees said of Jesus: "This fellow doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?" (MATT. 12:24-26). "Beelzebub, the prince of the demons," and "Satan," according to this statement, are one and the same person. The passage in the chapter of Revelation that we are considering says of the demons that come out of the pit: "They have over them a king, the angel of the abyss: his name is in the Hebrew Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon." These words, in Hebrew and Greek alike, mean "the destroyer."

Jeremiah, in his prophecy against Babylon, says: "Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind" (JER. 51:1). The word for "wind" is, literally, "spirit," and when the word, translated "raise," is used in connection with it, the expression means "to excite a spirit." Jeremiah prophesies that God shall excite against Babylon "a destroying spirit." It is a prediction of the coming day when Babylon shall become the dwelling place of demons and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird. These demons also have the power of working miracles, but not for the accomplishing of any good purpose. The "unclean spirits," spoken of in the sixteenth chapter, are

"the spirits of demons, doing signs, which go forth unto the kings of the whole habitable earth to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God Almighty" (REV. 16:14).

Demons made response in the heathen oracles, and we have an illustration in the woman who, possessed with the spirit of Python, followed Paul in Philippi, saying: "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation" (ACTS 16:17).

Such oracular demons were found lurking in the heathen temples, and were the real objects of worship in the idol shrines. Paul says: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons" (1 COR. 10:20 Gr.). They are the sources of moral and physical evil, especially when entering into a person, turning him into a demoniac, and afflicting him with various diseases such as: "epilepsy" (LUKE 9:39); "loss of speech" (MATT. 9:32); "blindness" (MATT. 12:22); and "raving insanity" (MATT. 8:28). They wandered about in desert and desolate places. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (MATT. 12:43-45). This testifies not only to the restless wandering of the demons, but is a prediction of the last days respecting Israel when demoniacal power over them shall be increased sevenfold. Demons give the moral character to "the course of this world," which is "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (EPH. 2:2).

Demons were frequently found in men, and were cast out by Christ's word, and also by authority delegated to His disciples.

Often more than one demon entered into a single person. Out of Mary Magdalene Jesus cast seven, and from the demoniac of Gadara a legion, which might have been as many as six thousand. Demons were not only obedient to the word of Christ, but also acknowledged Him as "the Son of God" (LUKE 8:28).

James bears witness to the fact that the demons believe in God. He says: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and tremble" (JAS. 2:19 Gr.). Such, then, is the nature and power of these agents of evil concerning which men seem perfectly willing to be ignorant. A more faithful and earnest attention to God's word would deliver us from many of the spiritual evils that now afflict us. The course of this world is accelerating more and more toward the final apostasy in which it will be found ripe for judgment. Men shall more and more give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, until the times of the Gentiles have run their course, when, the Church being removed from the scene, there shall no longer be any barrier to the incoming tide of evil, and the very gate of the pit shall be opened for this final assault of a demon host. As it was in "the days of Noah," and in "the days of Sodom," *so* shall it also be in the days of the coming of the Son of man. The moral character of those days is to be reproduced in the days to come. None of us can measure the depth of iniquity into which men shall sink when these demons are given their brief authority over the earth.

They are represented by an army of locusts emerging from the pit. The figure connects naturally with the prophecy of Joel, where, under the figure of an invasion of locusts, this same judgment we are considering is foretold. The second chapter of his prophecy begins with the sounding of a trumpet. This trumpet is a horn of jubilee and similar to the one spoken of in Revelation. Then the prophet proceeds to speak of "the day of the Lord." It is to be a day of "darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains" (JOEL 2:2).

This declaration is followed by a description of what has been thought to be a literal invasion of locusts. The language is similar to what we have in the book of Revelation where the locusts are spoken of as an army on the march. Joel says: "A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array" (JOEL 2:3-5). Much ingenuity has been exhibited in the effort to show that a scourge of literal locusts is fairly represented in the language here given, though it is universally admitted that, if such be the fact, the terms of the description are hyperbolical in the extreme. That Joel has no literal locust plague in mind ought to be perfectly evident to anyone that reads the prophecy closely. It is admitted by commentators generally that some reference, however vague, is made to the awful judgments by which "the day of the Lord" should be ushered in. The hypothesis of a *literal* locust scourge in the past is quietly set aside by the apostle Peter who, quoting from this prophecy, says the promise therein contained of the outpouring of the Spirit was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. In Joel's prophecy the locust scourge *precedes* the outpouring of the Spirit. (Chap. 2:28). There was no such invasion prior to the day of Pentecost. It is, however, evident from Peter's quotation, (ACTS 2:16-21), that he does not mean to convey the thought that Joel's prophecy was entirely fulfilled. His quotation stops abruptly in the middle of a sentence. If he had continued the words of Joel, and then said what he did, he would have falsified the prophecy altogether.

After the same fashion Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth reads from the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the

gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (LUKE 4:18-19). If we turn to the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, we find that Jesus, after the manner of Peter in his quotation of the prophecy of Joel, also stops in the middle of a sentence. After reading the words we have quoted, Jesus closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. "And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (LUKE 4:21). Jesus could not have continued to read further in the prophecy of Isaiah and have then made the assertion, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." The words, "the acceptable year of the Lord," are followed in the prophecy by the words, "and the day of vengeance of our God." There is a long break between "the acceptable year of the Lord," and "the day of vengeance of our God." Jesus, being aware of this, quotes that part of the prophecy that was that day fulfilled. "The acceptable year of the Lord" had come. "The day of vengeance of our God" is still future. This intimates again the long break between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy.

Peter in the same way, quoting from Joel, stops abruptly in the middle of a sentence. (ACTS 2:21. JOEL 2:32). A careful comparison of Peter's quotation with Joel's prophecy will conclusively show that Joel is speaking of "the last days," and it will be seen that the terms of his prophecy point definitely to the time of the sounding of the fifth trumpet. It is further evident that neither Joel nor Revelation intend to convey the thought of *literal* locusts.

Solomon says: "The locusts have *no king*, yet go they forth all of them by bands" (PROV. 30:27). But the locust host of Revelation has a king. They are restricted in their work of devastation, not being allowed to hurt the grass, nor any green thing, nor tree. These are the very objects upon which the literal locusts settle, and the restriction forbids a lit-

eral application. The historical interpreters, in applying this scourge to the Saracens, are not obliged to force the language as they do elsewhere, but the Saracenic invasion did not usher in "the day of the Lord"; whereas the judgment foretold by Joel and in Revelation does. The locusts have power, such as the scorpions of the earth have, and are permitted to strike with their poisonous stings the men that have not the seal of God in their foreheads. They are not permitted to *kill* men, but they torment them for five months. Again we are reminded that the torment is like that of a scorpion when he striketh a man.

The sting of the scorpion is in the extremity of the tail, which has at its base a gland secreting a poisonous fluid. The fluid, when injected into a man, is not only very painful, but usually fatal. Here again the literal scorpion is set aside by the fact that their sting is *not* fatal. The torment they produce among men is even worse than death. "In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it" (REV. 9:6). There shall not be left to men the power of self-destruction. Death itself shall flee from them.

The appearance of the locusts is like unto "horses prepared for war." The prophet Joel adds still further to the description by saying: "They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: and the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (JOEL 2:7-11).

Spirits of Demons issuing from the pit of the abyss shall march *everyone on his ways.* Nothing shall be able to break their ranks; nor shall they thrust one another. "When they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded," for the sword is powerless against spirits. They shall also render men immune from death. They shall run to and fro in the city, and over the walls, and upon the houses; they shall enter the windows like thieves, and "before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness." They shall possess men and women, as men and women were possessed in the days of Christ and the apostles. Some people are possessed to-day, and do not know it; others are possessed, and *do* know it. Mediums, in communication with the spirit world, are not uncommon. The barriers have long since been broken down, and these unclean spirits have crossed the border line, and are at work in the world. But there is coming an inrush of these demons such as the world has never dreamed of. Buddhism, Theosophy, and Spiritualism are casting this ominous shadow before them. No wonder the prophets speak of this day as one of *anguish* and *gloom.* "A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations" (JOEL 2:2). When the restraint that is now upon evil is taken away, this pall of darkness shall settle upon the earth. A spiritual mist shall wrap itself round the minds of men, who, persistently refusing to believe the truth, shall be given over to a *lie.* Rejecting the blessed gospel of Christ, and the truth of God's Word, they shall give heed to "seducing spirits and doctrines of demons."

Even now they that are striving earnestly for the truth must wrestle "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places." What then shall be the result among men, when, divine grace being withdrawn, there shall be added to

this spiritual host of wickedness an innumerable company of other unclean spirits from the pit of the abyss?

Jesus affirms the king of the whole host to be Satan himself. He is the governing spirit of them all. In what follows in Revelation we shall see how all the activities among men are shaped and energized by these devilish spirits. Satan himself is to be cast out of heaven, and these demons, leagued with him in his revolt from God, are the agents of destruction going forth from the pit to force the nations into the last great conflict of the world.

These troops of cavalry, "crowned with gold," "with faces of men," and "hair of women," "whose teeth are like lions," and who have "breastplates of iron," are *demons,* in search of the men into whom they shall enter, and drive on a forced march to the battlefield of God.

XVIII

DEMON POSSESSION

And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard one voice out of the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, Loose the four angels that are bound by the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, who were prepared for the hour and day and month and year, to kill the third part of men; and the number of the hosts of the horsemen was two myriads of myriads: I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and those that sat upon them, having breastplates of fire and jacinth and brimstone. And the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths goeth fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three plagues were the third part of men killed: by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone proceeding out of their mouths. For the authority of the horses is in their mouth and in their tails: for their tails were like serpents, having heads, and by them they hurt. And the rest of the men who were not slain in these plagues repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship the demons, and the idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornications, nor of their thefts.—Chapter 9: 13-21.)

THE sounding of the sixth trumpet is followed by a cry that rises from "the four horns of the golden altar which is before God." Though coming from the four horns it sounds to the apostle as a single voice. It is a cry for vengeance and, evidently, is an authoritative voice that summons retributive judgment.

Elliott, quoted in Lange's *Commentary*, says: "A cry commissioning judgment from the mystic incense Altar indicates that that Altar had been a scene of special sin. But this explanation is only partial. It would seem as if guilt had been contracted in respect of some ritual in which the horns of the Altar were concerned. There were three such services in the Mosaic

ritual. The first two were the occasional atoning services for sins of ignorance; the third that of the Annual Atonement. In all these cases, some of the blood of the sacrifice was put on the horns of the Altar. It was thus that Hezekiah made atonement for Israel after its apostasy under Ahaz. This rite of Atonement having been performed, the promised reconciliation with God followed. From the Temple, and Altar, and each blood-bedewed horn of the altar, a voice, as it were, went forth, not of judgment, but of mercy; instead of summoning destroying armies against Judah from the Euphrates, it staid them."

When Jerusalem, during the reign of Hezekiah, was threatened by an Assyrian invasion, the king, and the prophet Isaiah, prayed and cried to heaven. "And the Lord sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria" (2 CHRON. 32 : 20-21).

A reverse result follows the cry from the horns of the altar in Revelation. The Assyrians are not restrained, but a way is made open for them to set a great military force in action. The desolation of abomination, "standing in the holy place," has profaned the temple of God, and a voice from the golden altar cries for vengeance against the awful sacrilege. Command is given to "loose the four angels that are bound by the great river Euphrates." The river Euphrates is not to be regarded merely as a *boundary line;* for it also marks the site of ancient Babylon. The Babylonian empire was the first of the four monarchies that stood successively in opposition to the people of God. Babylon was followed by Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The fourth power is to be in existence at the time of the restoration of Israel. Inasmuch as the Euphrates will be the eastern boundary of the empire, we can easily conceive of Babylon being the imperial seat of the eastern third, as Rome evidently shall be the seat of the western third. Babylon, and not Rome, is the last imperial city of the world-empire to fall.

In the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters of Ezekiel, which testify to the desolation of the land of Israel in the last days, we are told of armies of the nations coming from the *other side* of the Euphrates into the land of Israel. The invasion referred to is manifestly premillennial, but of the same character as that of Gog and Ma-gog incited by Satan after his liberation from the abyss at the end of the thousand years.

The vast army that is mobilized here has its base of operations at Babylon. We are not told of the quarter whence this army comes, but it has an important place in the great impending conflict. The rebel angels hitherto restrained at the river Euphrates are supernatural and opposing *princes* and they are now used to open the way for this invasion against Israel.

The division of angels into different ranks and various orders is founded on specific declarations to that effect.

Angels are commonly represented in Scripture as "the agents of God's providence"; not only in the natural, but in the supernatural sphere, and they have relation both to the bodies and souls of men. What might seem to be the ordinary operations of nature are sometimes spoken of as being under the control of angels. According to the Psalms, the "air" and "fire" are often subject to them. They execute judgment. The firstborn of Egypt, and those that were disobedient in the wilderness, as well as the Israelites in the days of David, are spoken of as "slain by the angel of the Lord." Angels are also frequently spoken of in the New Testament as the executors of judgment. Herod, appropriating the glory belonging to God alone, was smitten by an angel.

The various declarations in the book of Revelation concerning angels cannot be resolved, by fair interpretation, into mere poetic imagery. The belief that angels, especially archangels, are in some way connected with the history and destiny of nations is justified by various passages of Scripture.

In the prophecies of Daniel and Zechariah we have the clear proof of angels being intimately connected with the governments of the earth. Daniel speaks of the "prince of

Persia," and of the "prince of Grecia." Michael, the archangel, is spoken of as the prince of Daniel's "people." This seems to indicate that he was especially delegated to look after the interests of Daniel's people, and we may well believe that the "prince of Persia" and the "prince of Grecia" were also in positions of authority over these respective kingdoms. It follows also, if Persia and Grecia were subject to such supernatural control, that Babylon and Rome would be under similar supervision.

It is further evident that the power of these angelic supervisors was derived from Satan; because both the "prince of Persia" and the "prince of Grecia" are represented as being opposed to the purposes of God respecting Israel.

We have already had before us the statement of Paul concerning Christ in which he asserts: "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (COL. 1:16).

If these governments speak of graduated spheres of authority, as they seem to, then, as Paul states elsewhere, rebellion is not found in "thrones and dominions," but in "principalities and powers" (EPH. 6:12). Principalities and powers, such as the four great monarchies under consideration, were without question under the jurisdiction of Satan, and there is no reason to doubt that subordinate angels of Satan were given mediate supervision of them.

"The four angels that are bound by the great river Euphrates" are certainly opposing princes, and appear to be such delegated authorities of Satan, now held under restraint of God, until the time shall have come when their liberation shall further the working out of His eternal purpose.

"And the four angels were loosed, who were prepared for the hour and day and month and year, to kill the third part of men." The time is fixed in the eternal calendar. Until that time comes they are kept under guard by the power of

God. Daniel's people, to whom they are opposed, are now scattered upon the earth under sentence of judicial blindness. When their restoration shall be effected, and the Holy Spirit, who is now the one restraint upon evil, shall be "taken out of the way," then these opposing angels shall be set at liberty, and, in all the energy of Satan, shall combine to establish the last great world-power represented by Nebuchadnezzar's dream. This dream, which the king could not remember and which none of the astrologers, or magicians, or soothsayers could interpret, was interpreted by Daniel, who said: "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (DAN. 2:28, 31-35).

In this representation there is given to us a symbol of the last world-empire, exhibiting the *combined* features of the four great monarchies, whose extended rule over man is spoken of by the apostle Paul as the "times of the Gentiles." The chart of the world's history is not unwritten; for God has already sketched the course of human events, and placed His plans before the eyes of men. The various forms of government now existing are not shaping their own destiny, nor accomplishing altogether their own will; they are acting

under limits of divine restraint, and for the accomplishment of what God has before determined. Existing governments are shaping themselves steadily and surely for the last days, when, all restraint of God being removed, Satan and his angels shall be the source and support of all earthly rule. The final form of these monarchies shall be smitten by a stone "cut out without hands," and the broken pieces of the shattered kingdom shall become "like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors." Then the smiting stone shall become "a great mountain," and fill the whole earth. The day for this is definitely fixed, and when it dawns these rebel angels, now confined, shall unite in bringing into existence the last great confederacy that will have its final headquarters, not in Rome, but in Babylon. Babylon is to be reproduced in all of its ancient magnificence, if not even in more. It has long vexed the commentators to find in the past history of Babylon anything that seems to be an adequate fulfillment of the prophecies of Jeremiah. It has been thought by many that his reference to foreign invaders could not possibly be covered by the Babylonian aggressions. It has been asserted even that he, and other prophets, have "colored their messages by earlier desolations," such as were wrought by the invasion of the Scythians. It has been shown that any reference in Zephaniah's prophecy to a Babylonian invasion is excluded, because Babylonia, at the time, was still under the supremacy of Assyria, and Palestine from that source without apprehension of danger. The prophecies of Jeremiah are still more complicated, because it cannot be shown that any of his discourses, as we now have them, relate at all to the Scythians. The only suggestion offered as an escape from the difficulty is to assert that passages that originally referred to the Scythians were afterwards introduced in Jeremiah, and made to apply to the Babylonians. The description of some "wild, northern nation, sweeping along and spreading devastation as it went" may possibly seem more distinctive of the Scythians than of the Babylonians; but, even so, it cannot be proved

that any desolations whatever were wrought by the Scythians. These commentators, in order to escape from the plain meaning of language, have accused Jeremiah of coloring his narrative of the Babylonian invasion by adopting language that could have no literal application except to some *supposed* Scythian invasion. After such iniquitous fashion, prophetic utterances are stripped of their significance or explained away altogether. Because nothing in history has yet occurred in correspondence with the solemn and accurate language of the prophets, it is therefore assumed that the terms of the prophecies are *overdrawn*. The possibility of a future restoration of these ancient kingdoms of the East is either ignored or treated as an absurdity. Daniel assures us that the final form of empire existing when Christ returns shall have the combined features of the four great powers under whose feet Judah and Jerusalem were successively trodden.

We have already seen that Persia and Greece were to some extent, if not altogether, controlled by superhuman intelligences; and by presumption Babylon and Rome were under like control.

The "four angels," corresponding to the four monarchies, are an indication of this, and their release suggests the reorganization of these kingdoms under superhuman, though satanic, direction. Joint action on their part would, as Daniel predicts, establish not *four* kingdoms, but *one* of diverse elements.

There is no necessity for our being disturbed by the limited time and the rapidity of action required to accomplish all this. One of the most striking features of the old Babylonian monarchy was its rapidity of action. In the year B. C. 609 Babylon had two mighty rivals—Assyria and Egypt; five years later Babylon was the undisputed master of the East. It required only these five years to undo the work of five centuries: for in them occurred the conquest of Syria and the resubjugation of Judah to the empire of Egypt. Nineveh, which only a few years before had exercised such widespread

power under the brilliant Assurbanipal, fell during the same period. The fall of Nineveh was followed by a series of calamities in which the rising power of the Chaldeans became the one theme of king, and people, and prophets. The prophets, in their denunciation of Babylon, made use of language that under no strain whatever can be made to apply to any Scythian invasion, nor to any effect following the destruction of the city by Cyrus.

As a matter of fact, the vision of the prophet was not limited by the Babylonian captivity, nor by the return of the remnant of Judah to build the waste places of Jerusalem. When Zephaniah uttered his prophecy, Israel, the northern kingdom, had been for a hundred years in captivity; yet his prediction is of *Israel* as well as of Judah. "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more" (ZEPH. 3:14-15). These words imply that Jehovah, after some definite stroke of judgment upon their enemies, should be in the midst of Israel, and manifest Himself also in the character of King. As "King of Israel" Christ is not recognized until the return of Israel from the land of their banishment. This prophecy, therefore, and others of like tenor shall have their complete fulfillment in the future.

The tremendous energy displayed by Satan in the last days shall accomplish what, under ordinary human conditions, would seem to be naturally impossible.

The prophet Habakkuk seems to refer to the rapidity of action that shall once more bring Babylon upon the scene. "Behold ye among the nations, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I work a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation; which march through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places that are not

theirs. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves; and their horsemen spread themselves: yea, their horsemen come from far; they fly as an eagle that hasteth to devour. They come all of them for violence; their faces are set eagerly as the east wind; and they gather captives as the sand" (HAB. 1:5-9. R. V.).

The activity and power necessary for the accomplishment of this prophecy is seen as soon as the four angels are loosed. Instantly there appear upon the scene of action hosts of horsemen, and our attention, in the most emphatic way, is called to their *number*. John says: "I heard the number of them." This implies the significance attached to the number: and the number of the hosts of the horsemen was two hundred million. Though divine significance is given to the number, commentators again warn us against seeking for any literal interpretation. The magnitude of the host has been urged against any attempt at literalism. Bengel "has added together all the Turkish armies of more than two centuries." To apply the number to some angelic host, without producing Scriptural warrant therefor, is to send us into a region where all reasoning is lost, and to permit man to roam wherever his imagination leads him. In seeking for some explanation of this great host, we must remember that we have come to a time in the world's history when supernatural agencies are manifest, and at work in every direction. It is the final assault of Satan against God and His people, and all his resources are summoned to the conflict. Until the time of his ultimate overthrow he is recognized as "the *god* of this age." He has angels and demons subordinate to him, and the restraining power of the Holy Spirit is alone holding in check his last outbreak among men. We have already seen something of the effect that shall follow the removal of all restraint upon evil. The pit of the abyss shall be opened, and demons shall be permitted to come out, and enter upon their destructive

work under the direction of Satan himself. At the same time rebel angels, hitherto restrained, shall be liberated, and become active again in the sphere of human government.

If these weird horsemen, two hundred million strong, are demon-possessed men, it would not, after all, make the number so extraordinary, provided there be given to us the number of the *demons* rather than of the horsemen. A *legion* of demons can possess one man. This fact is certified by the demoniac at Gadara. If *demons* be intended, then a host of less than forty thousand horsemen would insure the number so solemnly impressed upon John. This theory is not unworthy of serious consideration in view of "the great tribulation" toward which the world is hastening. Demon worship is, in fact, the very evil that shall give character to those days.

It would not require much time for such a host of demon-possessed men to reconstruct the city of Babylon and restore its magnificent temple. We are told that "Alexander found the great temple of Belus in so ruined a condition that it would have required the labor of ten thousand men for two months even to clear away the rubbish with which it was encumbered." With ten thousand horsemen, such as we are considering, Alexander easily might have carried into effect his desire for the restoration of Babylon. Humanly speaking, it may seem as if seven years were altogether inadequate to accomplish all the various restorations necessary for the literal fulfillment of prophecy. When, however, we take into consideration the fact that superhuman agencies shall be at work, and the power of Satan unrestrained, it is impossible for us to overestimate the possibilities of accomplishment in even so limited a time.

The horses of the vision are seen coming in three companies, characterized by the breastplates of their riders. The first have breastplates of "fire," the second of "jacinth," and the third of "brimstone." These breastplates seem to be formed by "the fire and smoke and brimstone" that proceed from the mouths of the horses. The smoke answers to the hyacinthian

hue of the jacinth. The heads of the horses are spoken of as the heads of "lions." The lion is the symbol of strength and ferocity. The most valiant men in David's army were the "lion-face warriors" of Gad. Judas Maccabæus, the Jewish patriot, is described as "like a lion, and like a lion's whelp roaring for his prey." The lion, as the symbol of sovereignty, occurs frequently in the prophetic visions. Christ is referred to as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." Satan is also spoken of as a "roaring lion." The lion was assumed by the heathen as the emblem of different gods, and it occurs in the names and standards of many nations. The lion was the emblem of the Babylonian empire. Daniel speaks of this empire as a beast like a lion with "eagle's wings"; the wings speaking of the rapid progress toward universal empire. The "lion-like faces" of the horses would seem to connect naturally with Babylon restored.

The "fire and smoke and brimstone," going forth from their mouths, are spoken of as "three plagues" by which the third part of men were killed. These look like divine judgments, and, though executed by satanic influence, they are such, and therefore under the hand of God, who maketh "the wrath of man" to praise Him, while "the remainder of wrath" He restrains. The tails of the horses "were like serpents, having heads, and by them they hurt."

Isaiah says, "The prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail" (Is. 9:15). Lying prophets characterize this time when men everywhere shall be given over to believe a lie. Both physical and spiritual death follow in the wake of this army of horsemen. "Fire and smoke and brimstone," which constitute the torment of hell, are permitted to overwhelm men. Satan, and his angels, shall inflict upon men the torture of hell, but so strange and obdurate is the human heart, that the men who suffer from such torment do not repent of their sins, nor learn through experience "that they should not worship the demons, and the idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk;

and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornications, nor of their thefts."

Demon worship, with the long train of evils that issue from it, not only gives character to these last days, but also shows how God shall be given up entirely and the heart of men altogether alienated from Him.

Some consideration should be given to this intensely solemn sin, which is the fountain head of all these iniquities. Paul says: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (1 COR. 10:20-21). The Greek word is *demons,* not devils, and should be so translated. The idol itself, as the apostle shows, was nothing; but the heathen deity, represented by the idol, was a solemn reality. In all the idolatry, so manifest everywhere, the power of Satan was working, and the Gentiles were sacrificing to *demons.*

This fact is established by the Old Testament as well as by the New. The Jewish idea of heathen deities is expressed in the fifth verse of the ninety-sixth Psalm, which reads literally: "All the gods of the nations are demons: but the Lord made the heavens." The Bible plainly affirms the possibility of communion with demons, and utters the most solemn warnings against it. Modern philosophy does not take much account of this, but that need not disturb our confidence in what the Bible teaches. Spiritual existences are certainly recognized in connection with the idols of heathenism, and they are declared to be *demons.* These beings, whatever their origin, are realities, and must be reckoned with in our estimate of evil powers exposed by the Scriptures. They are declared to be the "gods of the heathen," and in the Old Testament there are repeated accounts of Jehovah "executing judgment" upon them.

Before the passover night in Egypt Jehovah said to Moses:

"I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord" (EX. 12:12). This Scripture, instead of ignoring the fact of false gods, clearly affirms the reality of their existence. The execution of judgment upon them implies both reality and personality.

In the book of Leviticus the Jews are strictly prohibited from offering sacrifices unto demons. (LEV. 17:7).

In the song of Moses the people are charged with violating the statute. They not only provoked God to jealousy with a multitude of strange gods, but they actually *sacrificed unto demons.* (DEUT. 32:17).

When Jeroboam had expelled the Levites from the northern kingdom, "he ordained priests for the high places, and for the *demons,* and for the calves which he had made" (2 CHRON. 11:15).

In the one hundred and sixth Psalm, where the rebellion of Israel is reviewed, we read: "They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the Lord commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood" (Ps. 106: 34-38).

Whatever theory man may have about demons, they are plainly recognized in passages like these, and repeated warnings are given against any communion with them whatever. Because these warnings were unheeded by the Jews, God gave them up to the abominations of the heathen by whose false gods they had been seduced. The unclean spirits that haunt the air, and seek for embodiment among men, are the *gods* worshiped by the heathen. These demons inspired the oracles in the pagan temples. They furnished wisdom to the "sooth-

sayers," the "wizards," the "sorcerers," the "enchanters," and "diviners," and men of similar evil character.

Moses charged the Israelites, saying: "When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee" (DEUT. 18:9-12). These evils against which they are warned constituted a righteous cause for the expulsion of the Canaanites.

Such passages assume the possibility of establishing communion with demons, and, judging from the statement made by Paul, if fellowship with demons were once formed, it would result in that fellowship that the apostle used as the very antithesis of the communion between the Lord and His people. Such unlawful intercourse has always been the curse of paganism.

The Canaanites had broken through all restrictions that God in His mercy had placed about them, and the whole land became filled with these abominations. It is almost inconceivable that such a history should ever be repeated, but the express declaration of the Spirit is, that, in the last days, men shall once more be guilty of the awful wickedness that brought condemnation and ruin upon the Canaanites of old.

Polytheism is characteristic of all pagan religions, and the most hideous examples of demon possession are found among the heathen at this day. The object of the demon, after gaining possession of a man, is to *compel* his victim to *worship* him.

Dr. Nevius, who for many years was a well-known missionary in China, wrote a volume entitled "*Demon Possession and Allied Themes.*" He illustrates how a demon, after pos-

sessing a man, compels him to yield to, and *worship* him. Torment of the most afflicting kind is visited upon the demoniac until his will is completely surrendered, and he becomes not only a *private,* but also a *public worshiper* of the demon. Dr. Nevius says: "Before this full surrender of the will is made, if he had worshiped a demon, he would scarcely have owned it except with shame. Now he boasts of his power, and professes to heal diseases by the demon's aid." Testimonies of a similar character can be found in the annals of all pagan people. The whole spirit of paganism is to personify, and *deify* the lusts of the flesh. Gods are created that answer to the fallen nature of men, and, while they personify what he loves and would lawfully enjoy, they are nevertheless demons of lust worshiped as *gods.* These fallen men are the slaves of lust, and, repudiating the God who denies such cravings, they give themselves over to the unclean spirits, who not only permit, but urge them on to do what they desire. Wherever these evil spirits are tolerated among men, they make their way with irresistible power, and in the end we find them in solid phalanx against all that endeavor to keep the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

The mystery of lawlessness, found at work in the days of Paul, is moving steadily on, fitting the rejecters of Christ for the last outburst of rebellion. The history of the Old Testament people shall once more repeat itself in the final phase of humanity. From the days of Solomon the decline in Israel was swift and sure. Jeroboam made his name proverbial by regarding the *calves,* worshiped in Bethel and Dan, as "the gods which brought Israel out of Egypt." In the days of Ahab the awful apostasy from God assumed its worst form. Jezebel introduced the worship of Baal, and to him all Israel had bowed the knee, except the "seven thousand" that were hidden in the caves of the earth. Other altars were raised, not only in Israel, but also in Judah, and, the flood gates once open, the tide of iniquity rolled in. The Israelites

held unlawful intercourse with demons, as did the Canaanites before them. Men turned from God, consulting mesmerizers, sorcerers, soothsayers, and mediums with familiar spirits. As an offering to Molech children were flung from the frenzied arms of mothers into the devouring fire. Men were not simply demon-possessed; they became *demon worshipers.* The judgment of God on Israel followed in the wake of these miseries; the land was smitten with famines; invading hosts from the surrounding nations desolated and oppressed them; calamity after calamity fell upon them, but nothing availed to turn them from the wretched misery of their unbelief, and they were finally lifted from their ancestral seats and scattered to the four corners of the earth. Christian nations, which are supposed to represent God among the heathen as did Israel of old, are moving swiftly on to the same doom. The revival of ritualism and the trend toward Romanism show how Christ is being displaced in the hearts of men by image worship, and by divine honor given to "the queen of heaven and mother of God." Pagan lands are no longer the restricted territory of the foul spirits; they are now flooding countries professing Christianity. Men that have forsaken God are eagerly and earnestly willing through divination, astrology, necromancy, spiritism, and the like, to get into communication with the spirits of the dead. The resulting evils are the accursed brood of these foul spirits driving men on to the battlefield of God. There is a falling away from God's truth that solemnly testifies to the darkening of the skies. We can almost hear the distant moan of the coming storm that shall burst upon an apostate world.

These myriads of horsemen, whose coats of mail are mingled with "fire and smoke and brimstone," are the demon worshipers of a coming day, and it cannot be far distant from us now. They shall openly introduce once more the festering corruptions of Sodom that shall provoke the final judgment of Almighty God. Secure is no man that strives in his own strength to withstand the seductions of these foul spirits that

are even now abroad seeking to gain full possession of men. Much less will it be possible to stand against the evil that shall roll in upon the world when it shall be no longer under divine restraint, and unclean spirits of the abyss are let loose. Man may not bow down to any graven image, nor to idol carved in stone; but, if he be the slave of lusts which inevitably result from these delusions, he should consider the solemn question of Paul—"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (ROM. 6:16).

"Surely *in vain,*" says the wise man, "the net is spread in the sight of any bird."

May God open our eyes to see the "net spread" before us, lest that day come upon us unawares! "For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (LUKE 21:35-36).

XIX

LIGHT THROUGH THE CLOUDS

And I saw another strong angel descending out of heaven, clothed with a cloud, and the rainbow upon his head, and his face as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; and having in his hand a little book opened. And he placed his right foot upon the sea, and the left upon the land, and cried with a loud voice, as it were a lion roaring. And when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their own voices. And when the seven thunders spake, I was about to write: and I heard a voice out of heaven saying, Seal up the things which the seven thunders spake, and write them not. And the angel whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth to the ages of ages, who created the heaven and the things therein, and the earth and the things therein, and the sea and the things therein, that there should be delay no longer; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God also shall be completed according to the good tidings which he declared by his own servants the prophets. And the voice which I heard from heaven [was] again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the little book which is opened in the hand of the angel who is standing upon the sea and upon the land. And I went to the angel, saying to him, Give me the little book. And he saith unto me, Take and eat it up: and it will make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it will be as sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the hand of the angel, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth as honey, sweet; and when I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And it was said unto me, Thou must prophesy again of peoples and nations and tongues and many kings.—(Chapter 10.)

HITHERTO our attention has been directed to the persistent development of evil which, unchecked by divine judgment, at last culminates in man's turning recklessly away from God, and in his giving himself up to demon worship. These demons, like flitting phantoms of iniquity, shall come out of the abyss,

and, taking possession of men, shall reproduce on earth the awful corruptions of Sodom. In proof of this Jesus says: "As it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (LUKE 17: 28-30). When the iniquities of Sodom once more prevail among men, the full significance of the history in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis shall be seen. Four kings shall again combine against five. The Babylonian confederacy, urged on by the rebel angels of the Euphrates, shall be triumphant, but only to be smitten in turn by them that have the faith of Abraham. Like Abraham they shall return with the spoils of conquest, and be met by the true Melchisedec. He will bless them in the name of "the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth," and then Sodom shall get, not merely faith's refusal, but the judgment of God. The world's iniquity, like a river broad and deep, is rolling on toward this open sea of corruption, and every new departure from God is tributary to it.

Succeeding generations fall heir to the accumulating evils of the past, and the world ripens for the harvest. It is inconceivable that such sins should go on and mount up forever. There is a fixed barrier over which the floods of iniquity cannot rise, and that barrier is reached when Satan and his associates are apparently the sole possessors of the earth. In accomplishing this Satan shall have shot his last bolt, and sin shall have reached the limit of divine forbearance. This also specifies the time of direct and decisive interference on the part of God.

Judgment falls the moment man deifies the lusts of the flesh, and worships the demons by whom these lusts are incited. Such is the condition exposed by the first two "woe" trumpets. But now the seventh trumpet is about to sound, which, while it brings the third woe upon the earth, also testifies to the collapse of all evil. Between the sound-

ing of the sixth and seventh trumpets there is a parenthetic announcement, followed by a more detailed account of events connected with the second woe. This corresponds to the interval between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals. As the light broke through the clouds there, so also does it break through here, but in a more wondrous way. God is about to assert Himself, and in such a decisive way as to assure our hearts, and justify the conviction that he will speedily bring to an end the bondage of corruption into which the world has fallen.

A strong angel descends out of heaven. We have had nothing like this before. The angel that has the seal of God ascends from the sunrise. Here one *descends* from heaven to earth. What has taken place before this descent is after the manner of what men call "providential judgments." There has been no direct interference on the part of God with the course of events on earth. War and famine and pestilence have been so commonly the instruments of divine judgment that, even when multiplied, they occasion no particular wonder among men. These things may be necessitated by His holiness, but in such judgments men do not find God. As with Elijah of old, He is neither in "the wind" that rends the mountains, nor in "the earthquake," nor in the devouring "fire." By the "still small voice" He makes Himself known. We shall find Him here revealing Himself in the *Truth*. His word shall go forth, and not return to Him void; but shall accomplish that whereunto He sends it. The angel that descends from heaven, and claims the sea and land for God, holds in his hand the open book that shall certify to the supremacy of truth over evil in its last and worst manifestation. He is "clothed with a cloud," a "rainbow is upon his head," his face shines "as the sun," and his feet are like "pillars of fire." By almost unanimous consent this description can refer to none other than Christ; and yet there is no absolute necessity for this. It is quite true that the *sun* is the symbol of supreme authority, and the Lord Jesus is this;

but it is somewhat incongruous to think of Him in connection with the oath taken, that there shall be no longer delay in finishing "the mystery of God." It is quite true that "when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself" (HEB. 6:13). There is no difficulty found in swearing by Himself, there being no greater, but the angel is evidently claiming *in His name* land and sea for Him, and he declares that the mystery of the long delay in connection with this is about to end. May not the "strong angel" be Michael? His power, as Daniel assures us, shall be put forth in behalf of Israel at the time of restoration, and we shall presently see him in personal conflict with Satan. His name means "one who is like God." Surely no loss is sustained by Christ when His glory is reflected by another. At the end of this age "the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (MATT. 13:41-43). The redeemed shall *shine forth as the sun,* and this is no greater wonder than to see an angel with a face like "the sun," coming down from heaven, and claiming land and sea for Christ. At any rate, whether it be Christ Himself or some glorious representative of Him, the blessed truth proclaimed is not affected. Though man has sinned so grievously, the rainbow testifies to the fact that God has not forgotten His covenant with the earth. The cloud may conceal the face of this divine visitor from the eyes of men, but above the cloud the face is "shining as the sun."

The "pillars of fire" testify of judgment, but the rainbow upon his head is the token and pledge of mercy in connection with judgment. The glory of light is seen when the bow is in the cloud. "God is light" and the rainbow here reveals Him. The storm clouds that hang like a pall over the earth are to be brightened with the glory of God. The angel comes

clothed in majesty, and has in his hand an "open book." Secret things, which have hitherto belonged to the Lord our God, are now to be made known among men. The "mystery of God" is about to be finished. The "little book," which apparently had been hitherto shut, is now *opened.* This can scarcely be "the book of Old Testament prophecy," as many insist. The scope and fullness of Old Testament prophecy cannot be contracted into a *little book.* There is more prophecy in the Old Testament than has been commonly credited to it.

Moreover, the light of these prophecies has been largely focused on the brief period contemplated in the book of Revelation as the time of Israel's restoration. These prophecies have for ages been an open book, but the interpretation of them is altogether another matter. Conflicting interpretations prove conclusively that this book, however open, is by no means clearly understood by those who read it. Our inability to interpret it has, in reality, sealed it up again. It is, therefore, perfectly evident that a supplementary revelation is necessary for the full understanding of prophecy. The book of Revelation has already proved itself to be such a supplementary help. The sealed book that is spoken of in the fifth chapter is fully opened when the seventh seal is broken, but it is quite clear that the seventh seal does not contemplate anything beyond the sounding of the seven trumpets. The sounding of the seventh trumpet, as the angel here declares, *completes* the mystery of God. As a matter of fact we shall hear the sounding of this last trumpet in the next chapter. While this carries us on to the end, there are yet other things that are not contemplated in the seven-sealed book. What follows the sounding of the seventh trumpet is, therefore, a revelation supplemental to that found in the book of the seven seals, and "the little open book," held in the hand of the angel that takes possession of the earth and sea for Christ, is evidently this supplement to the seven-sealed book whose contents are fully before us when the seventh trumpet sounds.

It has to do with prophecy, and it is therefore related to the prophecies of the past. It contains more than is written in the Old Testament prophecies; for, when John had eaten and digested it, he prophesies of many things that are clearly beyond the range of any former prophetic vision.

The truth contained in the book is first made known to John, and then by him revealed to us in that part of Revelation that follows the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The ground covered by John is the same as that traversed by the Old Testament prophets. But John's statements are supplementary to, and explanatory of, what we find there. This little book, as we shall abundantly prove, does not necessarily speak of what follows the sounding of the last trumpet. It speaks rather of what has application to the whole period under consideration. Its supplementary character makes it plain that, as compared with Old Testament prophecies, it is a *little* book. Its application also is to the earth in connection with which all prophecy is to be fully manifested and illumined. The blessing for which the earth waits is dependent upon the restoration of Israel now outcast from the land. The birth throes of sorrow that accomplish this necessarily bring before us all other events connected with it. Paul has given us the sign that shall immediately precede the day of the Lord. "That day," he says, "shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 THESS. 2:3-4).

It would seem strange indeed if the book of Revelation, otherwise so full, should have nothing to say about the manifestation of "the man of sin." What John has to say of him is evidently revealed in the little book, for no mention is made of him until the little book has been digested. When "the man of sin" appears, everything moves with tremendous rapidity to the end fixed by the decree of God. Our atten-

tion is called to the action of the angel. "He placed his right foot upon the sea, and the left upon the land, and cried with a loud voice, as it were a lion roaring."

The roaring of the lion suggests again to us the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," who is now about to assert Himself more positively in that character in behalf of Israel. The roaring is answered by "seven thunders," which testify to the fact that the whole government of God is in action. The time has come for Christ to take unto Him His great power and reign, and behind Him, to accomplish this, are all the resources of God. The thunders speak with intelligible voices to John, and he was about to write down these utterances, when he heard a voice out of heaven, saying, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders spake, and write them not." It is, of course, impossible to say whether anything subsequently written by John answers to the proclamation made by the seven thunders. It is enough for us to know that power shall not be lacking to make good Christ's title to land and sea. We are next told of the positive way in which that title is asserted. "And the angel whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth to the ages of ages, who created the heaven and the things therein, and the earth and the things therein, and the sea and the things therein, that there should be delay no longer; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God also shall be completed according to the good tidings which he declared by his own servants the prophets." This shows us how quickly the prophecies contained in the little book are to be consummated. The limit to this last and most awful rebellion of man against God is definitely fixed. God's judgments are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out. "There is a path which no fowl knoweth," and man's wisdom fails him when he seeks to search out "the mystery of God." There has been apparently a long delay. God has seemed to withdraw Himself from the affairs of men, and, to our short-

sighted vision, He has acted as if He were not. Man's day upon the earth has been long, and filled with gloom. If God seems to delay the bringing in of a better hope, we are given full assurance here that He has not been indifferent. He has fixed a limit, and when that is reached *delay shall be no longer.* "Write the vision," said Jehovah to Habakkuk, "and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (HAB. 2:2-3). That is, it will not tarry beyond the appointed time. What a mystery this delay in the evolution of the eternal purpose has been! In the weakness of our faith we have stumbled over it. Infidelity has reared its head in mockery of it. The long conflict between good and evil seems as if it might go on forever. In it all, too, there has been the persistent triumph of evil. Power seems to accredit evil, and not goodness. But, however long the delay, we are assured of the ultimate triumph of righteousness over wrong.

Somewhere beyond the stars there stands an angel holding a trumpet; and the sounding of that trumpet shall usher in the Jubilee of God. Meanwhile, the heirs of glory are disciplined by the sorrows of the world. Beyond the darkness, in which man's day upon the earth shall close, faith sees the light flooding the everlasting hills with glory. The mystery of God shall be *finished.* We shall know as we are known. What seems now to be most against us shall then be shown to have worked in fact *for* us; for "we know that *all* things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (ROM. 8:28). The greatest of all mysteries is the undisputed supremacy of Satan over the earth. The trumpet that ushers in the Jubilee shall be the knell of doom for Satan. The mystery and confusion wrought by him shall be cleared up, and shall be ended forever. All things were created by Christ, and *for* Him, and when His authority over them is fully asserted, there shall be no longer

any *mystery* in the ways of God. "The good tidings" of Christ's reign over the earth, as the angel assures us, have been the prophetic burden of the ages past. If the prophets testify to the stormy night in which man's day on earth shall end, they do not forget to tell us of the dawn of a better day to follow.

John is instructed to take the little book and *eat it.* This he does, and finds it sweet to his taste, but exceedingly bitter in digestion.

Lange has well said: "Apocalyptic things have a wondrous charm. To the honey-like sweetness of the little book in the mouth, that enormous mass of literature testifies, which is engaged in the eating of it. But whosoever has, with some degree of understanding, appropriated the little book, is greatly pained within him by its startling perspectives and images. A termination is then put to all idyllic conceptions of the future, and the end of the world."

The full force of this statement is of the utmost importance. The study of prophecy begins usually with eager enthusiasm; in it there is a peculiar fascination even for the natural man. The vision of most men is limited by the distance from the cradle to the grave. What lies beyond that border line is wrapped in the mantle of mystery. Hamlet, in his reflection over the skulls unearthed, could associate nothing with them but the memories of what they were in life. Beyond the grave he cannot penetrate save to imagine that:

> "Imperious Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away."

Man's wisdom has added nothing to Hamlet's imagination. God only can answer Job's question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" and He has answered it with a decisive voice. He has taken the veil from the face of the future, and given us a full perspective in which there is neither vagueness nor uncertainty of outline. Most men are content to weave from their own imagination theories of a future, or else leave it alto-

gether for self-demonstration. In either case they give no heed to the voice of God sounding through the centuries. The prophecies are the testimonies of God. They "came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 PET. 1:21). These men were not independent religious thinkers; they were the living oracles of God. They spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; they elaborated no theories of their own, and often proclaimed truth transcending their ability to interpret. Speaking of this Peter says: "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into" (1 PET. 1:10-12). They made diligent search to discover the meaning of what the Spirit of Christ within them testified to, and found that the revelations committed to them were not for themselves, but for others. This fact puts their writings beyond the pale of ordinary literary criticism. In his effort to render intelligible the communications made to him Daniel's wisdom failed him. He says: "I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (DAN. 12:8-10).

To these writings of the prophets God has affixed His own signature, constituting them written testimonies of divine revelation. Without such certification these writings would have no more value than the writings of other men. When

there is wrought within us the conviction that in these prophecies there is sounding the voice of God, our whole being begins to throb with intense desire to know what He has said. We begin our study with eager interest; but, when the full force of the revelation breaks upon us, our souls are filled with bitter lamentations. This has been the personal experience of every true prophet, and of every sincere student of prophecy.

Jehovah said to Ezekiel: "Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; and he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe" (EZEK. 2:3-10).

When the veil is taken from the face of the future, we behold "lamentations, and mourning, and woe."

Amos says: "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord

be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it? I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is The God of hosts" (AMOS 5: 18-27).

Jeremiah says: "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger. For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end" (JER. 4: 23-27).

Again he says: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (JER. 9: 1).

Such is the uniform and solemn testimony of the prophets as they contemplate the future made known by the Spirit of the living God. No wonder the soul was filled with bitterness. Everywhere in the prophecies is the solemn moan of an impending storm. Man's day grows darker and darker until the terrific judgments purge the world from iniquity and vindicate the righteous wrath of Almighty God. This is the reversal of the hope so commonly entertained among men. The dream of a golden age without Christ is but the creation of a drugged slumber. Christ shall come, but the trumpet notes of judg-

ment shall sound before Him, and proclaim to the world the time of its baptism of fire. After that: "He will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (MATT. 3:12). This, though man may deceive himself and accept the delusion of Satan, is the word of God.

The solemn truth has been rejected by men of all generations and is rejected to-day. The prophets that proclaimed it were hated. Stephen reviews the history of Israel, and brings in the solemn indictment: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" (ACTS 7:51-53). This refusal of prophetic testimony bears witness to the moral unity of the nation throughout its history. Jesus, in His denunciation of the Pharisees, charges them with the same crime committed by their fathers. "Woe unto you," He says, "scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (MATT. 23:29-33). He that speaks here is no mere prophet. He is the Lord God of the prophets, and that generation, as the fathers had rejected the prophets before Him, filled up the measure of iniquity by rejecting Him. But this rejection only thickened the gloom that hung over their future, for alongside the prophecies of the past He placed still another: "Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them

shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation" (MATT. 23:34-36).

But, notwithstanding their rejection of every overture made to them in divine mercy, the heart of Jesus went out toward them, and He said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (MATT. 23:37-39). The prophets of God have been persecuted in every age since the world began, and no man that gives a faithful proclamation of the truth can hope to escape persecution from the hands of his fellows. The truth is not set aside by rejection, nor, by refusing it, shall men escape judgment. A full-hearted surrender to it, with all that this involves, may lead to bitter experience, but it will furnish the man of God unto all good works, and keep the lamp of prophecy burning when other lights have gone out. After this fashion John receives the book, and becomes qualified for further service. The angel says to him: "Thou must prophesy again of peoples and nations and tongues and many kings."

Steadily we are moving on to the time when "darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people:" but then "the Lord shall arise upon Israel." He shall make "bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Is. 52:10). This shall bring to a close man's day, and shall turn the solemn dirge of earth into the festal song of heaven. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (REV. 22:20).

XX

CRUX INTERPRETATORUM

And there was given unto me a reed like a staff, saying, Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those that worship therein. And the court which is outside of the temple cast out and measure it not, because it is given to the Gentiles; and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give unto my two witnesses, that they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands, which stand before the Lord of the earth. And if any one will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies; and if any one will hurt them, he must in this way be killed. These have authority to shut heaven, that no rain fall during the days of their prophecy; and they have authority over the waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with every plague as often as they will. And when they shall have accomplished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war upon them, and shall conquer them, and kill them; and their bodies [shall be] upon the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And they of the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations shall look upon their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their bodies to be put into a sepulchre. And they that dwell upon the earth rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those that dwell upon the earth. And after the three days and a half [the] spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon all that beheld them. And they heard a great voice out of heaven saying to them, Come up hither; and they went up to heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them. And in that hour there came a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and there was slain in the earthquake seven thousand names of men. And the rest became afraid, and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is passed; behold the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The world-kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ has come, and he shall reign unto the ages of ages. And the twenty-four elders, who sit upon their thrones before God, fell

upon their faces, and worshiped God, saying, We give thee thanks, Lord God Almighty, who art and who wast, that thou hast taken thy great power, and reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and to give reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to those that fear thy name, small and great, and to destroy those that destroy the earth.—(Chapter 11:1-18.)

INTERPRETERS of the Revelation exhibit more confusion in the exposition of this chapter than elsewhere. There is, however, a striking unanimity in the place accorded to the Church. "The temple," they say, "is here figuratively used of the faithful portion of the Church of Christ." The command is given to John "to measure the temple of God," in order to call his attention to "the size of the Church of God." The "altar" is again "the Church." The "outer court" signifies "a part of the Church of Christ." The "holy city," according to these expositors, is "always in the Apocalypse the type of the Church." The "two witnesses" represent "the elect Church of God (embracing both Jewish and Christian), and the witness which she bears concerning God, especially in the Old and New Testaments." "The twelve hundred and sixty days" constitute the period "during which the Church, although trodden under foot, will not cease to prophesy." Concerning the war of the beast against them we are told, "the whole vision is symbolical, and the intention is to convey the idea that the Church, in her witness for God, will experience opposition from the power of Satan, which will wax more and more formidable as time goes on, and result in the apparent triumph of the forces of evil. But the triumph will be brief; it will but usher in the end and the final subjugation of the devil." "The death of the witnesses" is "the fate of the Church" pictured in the life of Christ. "His witness, the opposition he encountered, his death for a brief time at the completion of his work, his resurrection and ascension, and triumph over the devil, are all here reproduced." In the ascension of the witnesses to heaven "the Church is triumphantly vindi-

cated." Finally the "elders," who worship God after the sounding of the seventh trumpet, are "the Church." In every turn of the kaleidoscope we get the Church. There is an endless variety of color, but without any symmetrical form. What wonder, when such diverse expressions are *forced* to mean the same thing, if there be endless confusion. Literalism may not solve every perplexity, but it does not lead into any such inexplicable obscurity as this.

Dean Alford, one of the clearest expositors of this book, speaks of this chapter, as "undoubtedly one of the most difficult in the whole Apocalypse." He also gives us a frank statement of the difficulties, but without any satisfactory solution of them. Concerning Jerusalem he says, "If Jerusalem here is simply Jerusalem, and the prophecy regards her overthrow by the Romans, and especially if this passage is to be made such use of as to set aside the testimony of Irenæus as to the date of the Apocalypse by the stronger testimony of the Apocalypse itself [so Düsterdieck from Lücke], then must every particular be shewn to tally with known history; or if this cannot be done, at least it must be shewn that none contradicts it. If *this* cannot be done, then we may fairly infer that prophecy has no such reference, or only remotely, here and there, and not as its principal subject."

Others also remind us that, if we insist upon a literal temple and city, then "this portion of the Apocalypse stands condemned as a prediction which was falsified within a year or two of its enunciation; for in verse thirteen it is expressly stated that the tenth part of the city fell, and nowhere else in the book do Jerusalem and the temple signify earthly places."* This is an unwarranted assertion, but we leave it for the present.

In reference to this Dean Alford says, "Into whatever difficulty we may be led by the remark, it is no less true, that the 'holy city' of verse two cannot be the same as the 'great city' of verse eight." "This," he says, "has been felt by the

* *The Pulpit Commentary. In loc.*

literal interpreters, and they have devised ingenious reasons why the holy city should afterwards be called the great city." The literalists could easily escape from the difficulty by adopting the interpretation given by Alford. We shall also consider this later.

Before going further, let us notice two other difficulties of which Alford can give no solution. Of the forty-two months he says: "I will further remark, and the reader will find this abundantly borne out by research into histories of apocalyptic exegesis, that no solution at all approaching to a satisfactory one has ever yet been given of any one of these periods. This being so, my principle is to regard them as being still among the things unknown to the Church, and awaiting their elucidation by the event. It is our duty to feel our way by all the indications which Scripture furnishes, and by the light which history, in its main and obvious salient events, has thrown on Scripture: and, when those fail us, to be content to confess our ignorance. An apocalyptic commentary which explains everything, is self-convicted of error."

Without attempting to explain everything, we have the assurance to believe that the period of forty-two months is not shrouded in a cloud so impenetrable as appears to Alford.

Again, in reference to the two witnesses, he remarks: "No solution has ever been given of this portion of the prophecy. Either the two witnesses are literal,—two individual men,—or they are symbolical,—two individuals taken as the concentration of principles and characteristics, and this either in themselves, or as representing men who embodied those principles and characteristics."

These appear to be the main difficulties encountered by the historical interpreters. It would have been far better to have acknowledged ignorance than to have elaborated theories that are justified neither by logic nor by Scripture.

In the eighth verse we are told that the dead bodies of the witnesses were left in the open street of "the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord

was crucified." Concerning this verse Dean Alford speaks very much more to the point, and gives us an illustration of his ability as a sound and logical interpreter. He says: "These words, *where their Lord also was crucified,* have principally led those who hold the literal Jerusalem to be meant. But if, as I believe I have shewn, such an interpretation is forbidden by the previous words, then we must not fall back on an erroneous view on account of the apparent requirements of these words, but enquire whether by the light of the subsequent prophecy, which is an expansion of this, we may find some meaning for them in accordance with the preceding conditions. And this is surely not difficult to discover. If we compare Chapter 18:24 with Matthew 23:35, we shall find a wider ground than the mere literal Jerusalem on which to place the Lord's own martyrdom and that of His saints. It is true, He was crucified at Jerusalem: but it is also true that He was crucified not in, but outside the city, and by the hands, not of Jews, but of Romans. The fact is, that the literal Jerusalem, in whom was found the blood of all the saints who had been slain on earth, has been superseded by that wider and greater city, of which this prophecy speaks: and as the temple, in prophetic language, has become the church of God, so the outer city, in the same language, has become the great city which will be the subject of God's final judgments. For those who consider this, there can be no hesitation in interpreting even this local designation also of this great city."

Having looked at the various difficulties encountered by this school of interpreters, we shall now prove that a literal interpretation of the greater part of this chapter is a positive prerequisite to the understanding of it.

We have already shown that the Scriptures consistently recognize a distinction between Israel and the Church. We need not repeat the argument. The restoration of Israel, after the removal of the Church from the earth, is a *prophetic necessity.* The seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy has been persistently ignored by the great mass of biblical expositors, and

this has produced nothing but eschatological uncertainty. Let there be a time and place for the restoration of Israel, and for the fulfillment of prophetic testimonies concerning them, and much of the darkness which has hitherto obscured the book of Revelation will be banished. The fact of restoration and of the fulfillment of apocalyptic vision during the period of that restoration is abundantly justified by Scripture, and, at the same time, it opens a door of escape from the intricate maze into which the historical interpreters have led us. An adherence to this fact not only disposes of the difficulties already mentioned, but puts into our hands the key to a clear and consistent interpretation.

The period "forty-two months," or "twelve hundred and sixty days," is unquestionably the first, or second half of Daniel's seventieth week. It is more probably the *second* half immediately after which the blessings decreed for Israel and the earth are effected. We have already seen that the placing of "the abomination of desolation" in the holy place divides this seventieth week of Daniel into two equal periods, the latter of which being that of the "great tribulation" which precedes the coming of the Son of man, during which also the earth is purged of iniquity.

The first verse of the chapter under consideration sets forth a sanctuary which can be none other than Israel's. Israel's restoration involves, as we have already seen, the restoration of the temple service. The mosque of Omar, which now stands on the temple area of the literal city, shall be thrown down, and a Jewish temple shall be erected wherein the daily sacrifices shall be offered when Israel shall again be in possession of her own land. It is easier to conceive of this than to resolve the difficulties involved in the refusal of the redemption of promises to Israel.

John is instructed to measure the temple with a reed, the ordinary measuring rod. This measuring of the temple, and the altar, and those that worshiped therein, is manifestly a *setting apart* of the temple and the worshipers to God. It

testifies to the fact that God is not indifferent to the people that He is about to bring back into established relationship to Himself. We do not need to think of a literal *measuring* of a literal temple. The symbolism is transparent enough surely. Much less are we under the necessity of thinking that John is being given some "apprehension of the size of the Church of God." It is *Israel,* and what connects with Israel's restoration and blessing, that is seen throughout. The measuring speaks of God's care of the remnant faithful to Him during this time of unequaled tribulation. The sealed company of the seventh chapter, by the sovereign grace of God, is to pass triumphantly through this period. Though the mass of apostate Jews under the leadership of antichrist may acquiesce in the profaning of the temple, Jehovah still claims for Himself the *sanctuary,* and the altar, as well as the true worshipers.

The "outer court" is given up, or cast out, and not measured; and it, as well as the holy city, the literal Jerusalem of the future, shall be trodden under foot for forty-two months, which are literally three years and a half, and, as we have seen, one half of the final seven years of Jewish prophetic history. We have here both literal and figurative language, and yet not the slightest difficulty is created if we keep steadily before us the unchangeable purposes of Jehovah concerning Israel. The Jewish temple long ago disappeared from the earth. God's glory, as visibly manifested there, is also gone, and the literal Jerusalem of to-day is a place of desolation and misery. The plain predictions of the prophets seem to be set aside. God has not interfered apparently with the course of human events, and they who shrink from the thought of any lapse in His word have attempted to reconcile the prophecies to the facts of human history. This reconciliation is repudiated by prophecy; and God's apparent indifference to what takes place on earth is a mystery that no one seems competent to clear up. The attempt to justify halting interpretations of failed promises has only deepened the mystery. Its solution awaits the hour when sea and land shall be claimed for Christ. During this

time of Jewish restoration there shall not be lacking a full and sufficient witness for God. He says: "I will give unto my two witnesses, that they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands, which stand before the Lord of the earth."

It is natural and right to turn to the fourth chapter of Zechariah for help in interpreting what we find here. The two witnesses are there seen in the same position as here, standing before "the Lord of the whole earth," and bearing testimony to His claim upon it. They shall bear witness to the fact that Christ is about to reign as a Royal Priest. No theory is of any value if it disaffirm the *personality* of these two witnesses. They are in fact two *men,* and testify for the definite period of three years and six months. They are specifically raised up for this very purpose. The power by which they are accredited links them with Moses and Elijah in a way impossible to mistake. Our attention is called to this in the most emphatic way, and doubtless for the purpose of elucidation.

"These have authority to shut heaven, that no rain fall during the days of their prophecy; and they have authority over the waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with every plague as often as they will."

This statement deserves a much more careful consideration than has ordinarily been given to it. We should be willing, whatever is involved, to follow this clue as far as it leads.

In the worst days of Israel's apostasy under Ahab Elijah appears before the king and says: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (1 KINGS 17:1).

James, commenting on this, says: "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (JAS. 5:17).

The drought continued for *three years and six months,* which

correspond to the *twelve hundred and sixty* days during which the witnesses bear testimony. This points in a most definite and literal way to *Elijah.*

The authority to turn the waters into blood and to smite the earth with plagues points just as plainly to *Moses.* The Lord said to Moses: "Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone" (Ex. 7:19).

Moses and Elijah are seen together on the mountain of transfiguration; and the meaning of the transfiguration is authoritatively given by Peter. He says: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 PET. 1:16-18).

The identification of the two witnesses is so positive that it would seem almost impossible for anyone to go astray. The traditional interpretation is, that they represent the Church of Christ, bearing testimony for Him during all the ages until He comes again. Notwithstanding the perplexity that is involved in this, it is still maintained with confidence by many. Such an interpretation is one of the necessities imposed upon such as have lost sight of the final week of Daniel's prophecy. That we are come to this last week has been clearly shown. The two witnesses are two persons who are the forerunners of Christ, and who proclaim to the Jews the fact that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Whether they witness during the first or second half of the week cannot perhaps be determined definitely, but that they are connected with one or the other

of these periods is perfectly manifest. The marks given to identify them are worthy of serious consideration.

The last words of the Old Testament are these: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (MAL. 4:5-6).

In Deuteronomy Moses says: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (DEUT. 18:15).

These two promises justified the Jews in looking for the reappearance of Elijah, and for the coming of a prophet like unto Moses.

When John the Baptist came, the Jews sent a delegation of "priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No" (JOHN 1:19-21). It is clearly evident from the questions proposed, that "Christ," and "Elijah," and "that prophet" were regarded by the Jews as three *distinct persons.* "That prophet" is manifestly the one concerning whom Moses testified. John's answer to the Jewish delegation makes it perfectly plain that he did not regard himself as "that prophet," nor did he regard himself as the reincarnation of Elijah for the purpose of fulfilling Malachi's prediction.

Jesus says: "All the prophets and the law prophesied until John; and if ye will receive it, this is Elijah, which was for to come" (MATT. 11:13-14).

It is to be distinctly noted that Jesus does not declare John the Baptist to be Elijah; He simply affirms that John was Elijah *if men would receive it.* Their failure to receive it disqualified John from being Elijah. John the Baptist proclaimed

the kingdom *at hand.* He announced nothing about the kingdom in its *present* form, with the King absent, and the administration in the hands of men. The kingdom did not take this form until Christ had been definitely rejected by the Jews. John knew nothing of this. He announced the kingdom, and himself the forerunner of the King. Had the Jews believed him, and received Christ, the kingdom promised to Israel would undoubtedly have been established then and there. Christ was of course aware of the rejection which awaited Him. Had Israel been ready to receive Him, there would have been no opportunity for John at all. John came in "the spirit and power of Elijah," and in that sense alone it could be said of him that Elijah had come. The Jews did not receive the testimony of John, and by their unbelief deferred the setting up of the kingdom until a future time. In reference to that future the disciples inquired of Jesus, saying, "Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things" (MATT. 17:10-11).

In the following verse He further says: "But I say unto you, That Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them" (MATT. 17:12).

Here He plainly refers to John who, acting in the power and spirit of Elijah, had come, and had been refused. Nevertheless Elijah must come, as Jesus affirms, and so also must come "that prophet" foretold by Moses. John the Baptist was neither the one, nor the other. There is no serious difficulty in conceiving these "two witnesses" to be literally Moses and Elijah. Elijah passed into heaven without death. Before his rapture he said to Elisha: "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went

on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 KINGS 2:9-11).

This reservation from death, when connected with the Scripture we have already had under consideration, would seem to imply the preservation of Elijah in the body for the fulfillment of his commission in connection with the establishing of the Messianic kingdom.

There is also a singular mystery shrouding the death of Moses. He "died in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (DEUT. 34:5-6).

Why was it that his sepulcher could not be found? It does not appear to be a sufficient explanation to say that God concealed his grave in order to keep the people from idolatrous worship. A stronger probability is that the body of Moses was taken out of the sepulcher.

Jude says: "Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (JUDE 9).

What is meant by this contention of the archangel with Satan about the body of Moses? Is it enough to say that Satan was trying to bring to light what God had hidden? Is it not at least possible that the archangel was commissioned to get the body of Moses, and was resisted in this by Satan? It is no more difficult to conceive of the reservation of the body of Moses than it is to conceive of the reservation of the body of Elijah. We need not be disturbed about God's ability to preserve mortal bodies in heaven if He choose to do it. The thoughts that naturally arise in connection with such a suggestion have no justification if they in any way limit the ability of God to do this. Peter recognized them on the mount, which he could not have done, if they had been *disembodied spirits.* Their conversation with Christ had reference to His approach-

ing death, literally the exodus that He should accomplish at Jerusalem, and Peter affirms that the entire transfiguration scene was a fore-gleam of the establishing of the kingdom of Christ in power and glory. These two men are in *some manner* definitely associated with Christ in the inauguration of His kingdom. They represent the law and the prophets which unite in proclaiming the certainty of that coming kingdom. The reappearance of them at the time of Israel's restoration can be conceived of without much difficulty, and such a theory is not burdened with the obscurities involved in any other. If objection be raised against the *literal* return of these two men, then it can be shown from the statement of Jesus concerning John, that another than Elijah could fulfill the predictions concerning him. This is equally true of Moses. Therefore any two men endowed with the power and spirit of Moses and Elijah might be raised up for this period of testimony, and answer all the necessary demands of the prophecy.

The "two witnesses," then, are either Moses and Elijah *personally,* or two other men in every respect like them, and sent to bear witness for Christ during the first or second half of Daniel's prophetic week. The Scriptures clearly permit of no other solution.

We are further told that "when they shall have accomplished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war upon them, and shall conquer them, and kill them."

The mention of the *beast* here is proleptic, and what he represents will come fully before us in another chapter.

"Their bodies shall be upon the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified."

Dean Alford's interpretation of this is both clear and logical. We have already shown that the sins of Sodom are to be reproduced among men just before the coming of Christ. This condition is the natural result of demon worship which gives character to that day. While Babylon will be the stronghold

of these unclean spirits, it is also probable that their defiling work will be carried on in the literal Jerusalem. The testimony of the witnesses shall be given among their own people, the Jews, and for the purpose of preparing them to receive the Messiah. This seems naturally to point to the literal Jerusalem as the scene of their prophecy. But Jerusalem is trodden down by the Gentiles during the second half of the closing week of Daniel, and the beast, who is the head of the Gentile supremacy, puts them to death. In the death of these two witnesses the triumph of evil seems to be complete.

"They that dwell upon the earth rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those that dwell upon the earth."

The bodies are allowed to lie in the street, and burial is denied them, but God vindicates their testimony in the sight of all men. "After the three days and a half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon all that beheld them. And they heard a great voice out of heaven saying to them, Come up hither; and they went up to heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them."

If this be, as has been suggested, the time when the saints martyred under the beast are added to the number having part in the first resurrection of which the vision in the twentieth chapter speaks, then it is plain that the power of the beast against the saints is ended, and that we are contemplating the end also of the last week of Daniel. The two may representatively stand for all the martyrs slain during the beast's supremacy. The resurrection and the ascension of the witnesses is followed by a great earthquake during which the tenth part of the city falls, and seven thousand men are killed, while the rest become affrighted and give glory to the God of heaven.

The tenth is a suggestion of the tithe, whose enforced payment is exacted by heavy judgment. The refusal of God's witnesses on earth, while He is still recognized as the God of heaven, is an exhibition of the spirit which shall claim the earth

apart from God. This has been the aim of Satan from the beginning; but, though now it seems to be fully established, it is about to be broken. This also brings to an end the second woe, to be followed quickly by the third and last. The third woe is in reality the establishing of the kingdom of Christ. The answer to the prayer that has gone so continuously up to God,—"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,"—overwhelms the dwellers upon the earth in a last and awful woe.

The seventh angel sounds, and great voices are heard in heaven saying, "The world-kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ has come, and he shall reign unto the ages of ages." This is also a proleptic announcement of the kingdom about to be ushered in. No further details in connection with it are here given, but, the announcement being made, jubilant notes are heard in heaven. The elders cast themselves upon their faces and worship God, saying, "We give thee thanks, Lord God Almighty, who art and who wast, that thou hast taken thy great power, and reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and to give reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to those that fear thy name, small and great, and to destroy those that destroy the earth." When Christ comes, the nations of the earth shall be in angry rebellion against Him. In patient grace He has borne with them through all these centuries, and yet when the end comes they are still seen in banded opposition to Him. The prediction of the second Psalm shall then have its complete fulfillment. The kings of the earth shall set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed; they shall make their final effort to break His bands asunder, and to cast away His cords from them. Their resistance shall be met by Omnipotence. They that refused the call of the Shepherd's voice shall be smitten down with the rod of His power. He "shall break them with a rod of iron" and "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." The colossal power of world-

empire shall be smitten down by Him who alone has title to reign.

The taking of the kingdom in power introduces "the day of the Lord," which comprehends the judging of the dead, the giving of reward to them that have served Him, and the destruction of them that have defiled and destroyed the earth. Before the actual reign of Christ begins our attention is turned to those who, under the impulsion of Satan, shall incite the nations of the earth to this futile rebellion against God. Satan shall be stripped of every disguise, and we shall see him exhibiting that tremendous power that God has, to our poor vision, so strangely permitted him to wield. We shall see him reduced to utter weakness, and finally doomed to the lake of fire which has been prepared for him and his angels. We shall see, also, that from his awful despotism there is a possible deliverance for all that respond to the call of the gracious voice of God. God's wrath shall be visited only upon such as are hopelessly rebellious against Him. When this wrath is spent, He is free to rest in His love, and reward those, whether they be little or great, who have trusted in His grace.

XXI

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail. And a great sign was seen in heaven,—a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon beneath her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and being with child she cried, being in travail, and in pain to bring forth. And there appeared another sign in heaven, and behold a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems; and his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth, that when she brought forth he might devour her child. And she brought forth a son, a male child, who shall rule all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught away to God and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God that they may sustain her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days.—(Chapters 11: 19; 12: 1-6.)

THE sounding of the seventh trumpet, as already noted, is at the conclusion of the judgments that prepare the earth for the Millennial reign of Christ. The present vision, therefore, is supplementary, but it is in immediate relation to what we have had before. The last verse of the eleventh chapter, by common consent, belongs to this supplementary revelation. John sees the temple of God opened in heaven, and the *ark of the covenant* there.

When the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, it is called "the holy city," and we are expressly told that there is "no temple therein." Where all is holy no temple is needed as a place of worship. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." When God is so recognized and worshiped, there shall be no longer any need

of a local temple. Jeremiah prophesies of the day when all remembrance of *the ark,* and worship connected with it, shall have forever passed away. He says: "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: and I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart" (JER. 3: 12-17). When the Millennial kingdom is established, Jerusalem shall be known as a holy city, and, during the reign of Christ, shall be known as "the throne of the Lord."

The holy of holies was but a figure of the holiest of all, that is, heaven itself. The high priest, passing into the most holy place once a year on the great Day of Atonement, could be only a type. The apostle says: "The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing" (HEB. 9:8). Christ having accomplished atonement passed through the heavens and answered to the type. The most holy place in the temple was, therefore, typically the dwelling place of God. It was, both in the tabernacle and in the temple, the abode of the *ark.* It contained no other

furniture than this ark, except the golden censer, the golden pot that had manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant.

The ark itself was overshadowed by the cherubim of glory, and it gave whatever there was of real significance to the sacred place. It is spoken of as "the ark of God," "the ark of the covenant," and "the ark of the law." It was an oblong box of acacia wood, nearly four feet long and something over two feet broad and high. This box was overlaid with the purest gold. On either side were two golden rings through which were passed gold-covered poles by which it was borne by the Levites of the house of Kohath. The veil which hung before the most holy place covered the ark when it was taken to different locations. When the Israelites were on the march, it was covered with a purple pall, and borne with the greatest reverence by the Kohathites. It was the most sacred object among the Israelites. Taken by the priests into the Jordan, the waters rolled back, and the people passed over dry shod. It was also at the head of the silent host that encompassed Jericho. It was regarded with superstitious dread by the surrounding nations, who called it the God of the Israelites. It remained in the tabernacle at Shiloh until the time of Eli when it was carried to the battlefield in the vain hope that it might save the Israelites from defeat by the Philistines. The Philistines not only won the victory, but captured the ark. Wherever the ark was taken among the Philistine cities, the oppressive judgments of God followed, and the Philistines were glad to get rid of it. It was finally brought by David to Mount Zion, and afterwards placed in the temple of Solomon. Nothing whatever is known of its history after the city was sacked and the temple plundered by the Babylonians. The Jews had a tradition that it had been safely concealed from their enemies, and would be brought to light by the Messiah. It is absolutely certain, from all Jewish authorities, that the ark was not in the second temple; nor is there any record of there being another ark. This was one reason why the second temple was regarded as inferior to the

first. The ark had a peculiar significance to the Jews because it was a token of Jehovah's presence among them. The reappearance of the ark is therefore significant. In the vision of John it comes before us for the first time since the Babylonian captivity. Though long lost to the earth, the significance of it has never been lost sight of, nor forgotten by a gracious God. The sins of the people caused the withdrawal of His presence from them. His holiness made it impossible for Him to continue longer with them in such intimate relationship. His presence among them implied holiness on their part. Their restoration implies the putting away of their sins, which shall in fact be accomplished when their High Priest who has gone in on their behalf shall come again "without sin unto salvation."

The restoration of the ark means, surely, the restoration of the divine presence in the midst of the old covenant people. The ark, except in its typical significance, has nothing whatever to do with us. It belongs to the Old Testament people in exclusive connection with the temple service. In its typical import, however, it has the most precious significance for us. It speaks of Christ incarnate through whom alone we have access into the presence of God. It never could have had this significance to the Jews. For them it meant God's presence with them, and His working in their behalf.

In this part of Revelation to which we are come the Church of Christ is nowhere seen, except enthroned in heaven, and the reappearance of the ark of the covenant is another of the many evidences that can be produced to show that God is once more taking up the cause of Israel. The visions that follow relate to God's covenant with them. The restoration of His presence among them is accompanied by "lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail." These carry us back to the fourth chapter, where similar action is seen in connection with the throne when Israel's cause is taken up once more. They are suggestive of the necessary judgments which shall open the way for, and justify the presence of God among

His people. God has not forgotten His grace toward Israel, and, even though the storm clouds of His judgment roll over the world, He is abundantly able to redeem every promise.

When the ark comes into view, signs appear in heaven. A woman is seen, "clothed with the sun, and the moon beneath her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." Over against this appears another sign: "A great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems." The dragon is represented as standing before the woman ready to devour her child as soon as it is born. Nevertheless, "She brought forth a son, a male child, who shall rule all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught away to God and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God that they may sustain her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days." There ought not to be the slightest difficulty in interpreting the meaning of these symbols, and there would not be, if the Church were not brought in to confuse us. We are told plainly that the *great dragon* is "the ancient serpent who is called the *Devil* and *Satan.*" There is certainly no ambiguity in this.

The identity of the male child can be established with the same certainty. The words "who shall rule all nations with an iron rod," as Alford says, "cited verbatim from the Septuagint version of the Messianic Psalm two, leave no possibility of doubt, who is here intended. The man child is the Lord Jesus Christ, *and none other.* And this result is a most important one for the fixity of reference of the whole prophecy. It forms one of those land-marks by which the legitimacy of various interpretations may be tested; and of which we may say, notwithstanding the contradiction sure to be given to the saying, that every interpretation which oversteps their measure is thereby convicted of error. Again, the exigencies of this passage require that the birth should be understood literally and historically, of that Birth of which all Christians know. And be it observed, that this rule of interpretation is no confident assertion of mine, as has been represented, but a result from the

identifying use of words of the prophetic Scripture, spoken of Him who will not suffer His honour to be given to another." This statement is decisive and irrefutable.

The woman alone remains for identification. Here the confusion is at once apparent, and Alford, in common with others, staggers under the burden created by the failure to distinguish between Israel and the Church.

For an illustration of exegetical fog read this from Lange! "Only three explanations are possible here:

"(1) The *Woman* (as the Bride of the Lord, in accordance with a standing Biblical view, based upon deep and essential spiritual relations, the contrast of spiritual receptivity and spiritual creative power) is the Christian Church (Bede et al. to Bengel et al.), or, particularly, the Christian Church of the last time (a Lapide, Stern, Christiani). The attempt has been made to remove the contradiction which makes the Christian Church the mother of Christ, by saying, that by the birth of the Messiah we are to understand the birth of Christ in believers; or even by declaring that His birth is His return to judgment (Kliefoth).

"(2) The *Woman* can be only the Old Testament Church of God, the true Israel (Herder et al. to Düsterdieck). Ebrard even apprehends by the *Woman,* the *natural* people of Israel *qua* possessor of the promises.

"(3) The *Woman* is the Old and New Testament Church of God in undivided unity (Victorinus to De Wette, Hengstenberg, Auberlen). The fact that the Woman cannot be referred to the New Testament Church alone, results clearly from ver. 5; the Christian Church did not bear Christ. Holding fast the identity of her in the Heaven and Her in the wilderness, neither can the Woman be significant of the Old Testament Church by itself, since the same Woman lives on in the wilderness throughout the New Testament period of the cross. The unity of the Old and the New Testament Church of God lay, doubtless, much nearer to the contemplation of John than to that of an exegesis whose view is, in many respects, too exclusively

fixed upon externalities. Though it is impossible that John could have apprehended the Woman as Mary herself, yet the fact was most closely present to his consciousness that this Mary, whose bodily offspring Christ was, was the final concentration of the Old Testament Theocracy—the Theocracy which, in respect of its inner essence, spiritually gave birth to the Messiah, and which, in respect of this inner essence again, continued, as the Kingdom of God, in a new and New Testament shape."

The first explanation has no Scriptural warrant whatever and can therefore be dismissed.

The third explanation is founded on "the undivided unity of the Old and New Testament Church of God." Inasmuch as the Scripture reveals absolutely *nothing* as to such an "undivided unity," and uniformly maintains a clear-cut distinction between the Old Testament people and the Church of Christ, this also can be dismissed.

The only place where the word "Church" is applied to the Old Testament people is found in Stephen's address. "This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us" (Acts 7:37-38).

The people who were *called out* of Egypt, and constituted the "church in the wilderness," were *Israelites* "to whom," as Paul affirms, "pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 9:4-5).

Not a vestige of evidence can be found anywhere in the Scripture to show that these Israelites constituted the Church of Christ as revealed in the New Testament. The Church had no existence before the Day of Pentecost, and the Israelites

had no part whatever in it except as they came into it individually by regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

In the passage just quoted from Romans we have given us the *identity* of the woman who gives birth to the male child. Paul is speaking of the Israelites, "of whom," he says, "as *concerning the flesh* Christ came." The Church did not produce Christ, but Christ produced the Church. After Peter's declaration of His deity Christ declared His future intention of building the Church. From *Israel,* according to the flesh, Christ came, so that Isaiah could truly say: "Unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a son is given."

The woman is clothed with the sun. The sun is the symbol of supreme and underived authority, and speaks plainly of the power and glory of Christ. This power and glory is now seen wrapping itself around Israel in the time of the national restoration to favor and blessing.

The moon reflects the light of the sun, and may speak of the typical ordinances in Israel which reflected the glories of Christ.

The twelve stars speak naturally of the twelve tribal heads, and testify here to the restoration of *all* Israel.

The thought of Israel being in travail with Messiah is, as Grant says, "a thing hard to realize or understand as to the nation, except as we realize what the fulfillment of God's promise as to Christ involved in the way of suffering on the part of the nation. To them, while under the trial of law and with the issue (to man's thought, of course) uncertain, Christ could not be born. The prosperous days of David must go by; the heirs of David must be allowed to show out what was in their heart, and be carried to Babylon. Humiliation, sorrow, captivity, fail to produce result: while the voice of prophecy even lapses with Malachi, until the long silence as of death is broken by the cry at last, 'To us a child is born.' Here is at least one purpose, as it would seem, of that triple division of the genealogy of the Lord in Matthew, the governmental Gospel, in which the first fourteen generations bring one to the

culmination of their national prosperity; the second is a period of decline to the captivity; the third a period of resurrection, but which only comes at last, and as in a moment, after the failure of every natural hope. Thus in the government of God Israel has her travail-time."

The birth of the male child, having reference as it undoubtedly has to the literal birth of Christ, carries us back in time through the whole Christian dispensation concerning which the book of Revelation has so little to say.

There is an important passage in Micah that tells us of the rejection of Christ, the setting aside of the nation because of it, and their final restoration. No hint is given of any Christian dispensation between the rejection and restoration. "They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel" (MICAH 5:1-3).

Here the rejection of Christ is plainly seen in the smiting of the judge of Israel. This does not affect the purpose of God toward Israel. Bethlehem was nevertheless the birth-place of God's Ruler over Israel. They might reject Him, and for this God would also give them up until through travail-pain of sorrow they should be brought into the place of blessing. The prophecy covers the entire time from the birth of Christ to the time of Israel's restoration.

The book of Revelation, as we have abundantly proved, does not take into consideration the long interval of time between the rejection of Christ by the Jews and their restoration again to divine favor. With Christ born and definitely rejected, time for Israel is not counted until after the Church has been removed from the earth, and Israel's prophetic history is again taken up. The dragon is seen antagonistic to Israel and Christ,

and stands ready to devour the male child as soon as he is born. In the slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem may doubtless be seen the first attempt upon the child's life. This assault upon Him, and all the subsequent ones were unsuccessful. Christ, after the seeming defeat of the cross, rose from the grave, and from the Mount of Olives was *caught up* to God and His throne. Israel's history, as connected with the Messiah, is temporarily suspended, though assurance is given them that if they would repent of their wickedness and turn in heart to God, Jesus would immediately return from heaven and establish the Messianic kingdom. This plainly is Peter's meaning in the passage—"Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began" (ACTS 3:19-21, R. V.). The apostle reasons, that through ignorance they had killed the Author of life, but that God had raised Him up. Heaven had received Him whom the world had cast out, and His return from heaven was necessary in order to bring in the long predicted blessing to the earth. "The times of restoration of all things," spiritual as well as physical, had been the prophetic burden of the ages, but these times must wait for the return of Him whom they had rejected. Peter states that a national repentance on their part would not only result in the blotting out of their sins, but should also bring in seasons of refreshing from the presence of Jehovah, who would send Christ back to set up the long-expected Messianic kingdom. To Peter's appeal there was no response on the part of the Jewish people. They remained in their unbelief, and are in unbelief to this day. The intervening period has constituted a time of suspension of God's promises concerning the earth. During this interval God is accomplishing other purposes in which Israel, as a nation, has no part. The Church, though not

the heir of Israel's promises, has come into the place of blessing which Israel lost through unbelief. The wrath of the dragon being specifically directed against Israel and Christ, no note is made of the time between the catching away of the male child, when Israel's history was temporarily suspended, and the expulsion of Satan from heaven, which is synchronous with the resumption of that history.

Daniel's seventieth week is linked on to the sixty-ninth as if there were to be no lapse between them. Revelation, after announcing the defeat of the dragon by the ascension of Christ, continues as if there had been no break whatever in Israel's history, and brings us to the beginning of the seven years in which Israel's restoration is accomplished. "The woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God that they may sustain her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days."

These twelve hundred and sixty days seem to constitute, though not necessarily, the *first* half of Daniel's last week. At any rate Satan begins his persecution of Israel immediately after his expulsion from heaven. As a red dragon, ready to devour the male child, he maintains his place *in heaven;* and his persecution of the woman and the remnant of her seed follows his expulsion therefrom.

It has been usual with commentators that are familiar with this system of interpretation to think of the Church as being included in the catching away of the male child. This, however, is not necessary to a clear and consistent interpretation. The Church is safe in glory. Why not leave her there? Her introreception has produced the bewildering fog that has almost put the book of Revelation beyond the pale of intelligent interpretation. Having escaped from this fog, let us keep clear of it Revelation here is speaking of the woman; the male child; the remnant of her seed, and the dragon, *alone.* To introduce any supplementary features out of our own imagination is only to confuse what should be perfectly clear. The connection between "the catching away" of the male child and "the

flight of the woman" into the wilderness is manifest, and it harmonizes in every particular. Satan's opposition to Israel and to Christ is alone under consideration. Israel has had no Scripturally recognized history since the rejection of Christ, and shall not have until after the purposes of God concerning the Church are finished, and the nation is again brought upon the scene.

The Church, as the body of Christ, does not appear in this vision, which, leaping at once from the catching away of the male child to the woman's flight into the wilderness, brings us to the beginning of the seventieth prophetic week. The persecution of Satan *begins,* but the woman flees to the wilderness where she has a place prepared of God, and where she is sustained for twelve hundred and sixty days. If this flight occurs in the *middle* of the week, which is of course possible, then it would follow the violation of the covenant by the Roman prince. He appears when the first seal is broken, and, under the accumulating disasters which follow him, the Israelites may be forced to flee as a nation from Jerusalem. The prophecy in Matthew warns the nation to flee when the abomination of desolation is set up, and this we know will be in the middle of the week when the covenant is violated. This would seem to indicate the second half of the week as the time of the woman's nourishment. The war in heaven to which our attention is now turned brings Satan personally upon the scene, as well as the instrumentalities through which he works.

XXII

SATAN'S EXPULSION FROM HEAVEN

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels went to war with the dragon, and the dragon made war and his angels; and he prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven; and the great dragon was cast out, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who leadeth astray the whole habitable earth; he was cast out unto the earth and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a great voice in heaven saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast out, who accused them before our God day and night: and they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life unto death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that tabernacle in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil is come down unto you having great wrath, knowing that he hath a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the male child: and there were given to the woman two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is sustained a time and times and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might make her to be carried away of the river; and the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and drank up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus.—(Chapter 12:7-17.)

THE thought of a *literal* war in heaven has seemed to some to be so extravagant, that the skill of many apocalyptic exegetes has been put to the test to explain, or, perhaps more properly, to explain away, this vision. Lange, apparently, will not allow of Satan's being in heaven at all. But why should he? The ever available Church is fully sufficient for the solution of all his exegetical

problems. He says: "The Heaven, in which the Dragon makes his appearance, can be neither the antemundane Heaven of the angel-world—since the fallen angels did not immediately fall to earth—nor the Heaven in which the glorified Christ is enthroned. That which is intended, therefore, is the Heaven that Christ has instituted on earth—the invisible Church, the communion of saints—into which Satan, as a dragon, has found entrance, just as, long ago, he pressed into Paradise."

With such imaginings thrust upon us by an able commentator, it is no wonder if the ordinary student be in despair of ever arriving at the meaning of definite language.

Dean Alford gives us something much more like interpretation, and, at the same time, furnishes a vivid illustration of how near a man may come to the mark, and yet miss it. A *literal* interpretation, if it be the true one, must of necessity be consistent throughout. Dean Alford is clear enough until he comes to the flight of the woman into the wilderness. Here he becomes bewildered, and makes frank acknowledgment of his inability to give us anything satisfactory. His heroic effort to deliver himself from the difficulties by which he is overwhelmed is so interesting that it may be well to quote him at length.

He says: "We cannot help being struck with the continued analogy between this prophecy and the history of the Exodus. There we have the flight into the wilderness, there the feeding in the wilderness, as already remarked: there again the forty-two stations, corresponding to the forty-two months of the three years and half of this prophecy: there too the miraculous passage of the Red Sea, not indeed in strict correspondence with this last feature, but at least suggestive of it. These analogies themselves suggest caution in the application of the words of the prophecy; and in this direction. The church in the wilderness of old was not, as some expositors would represent this woman, the pure church of God: His veritable servants were hidden in the midst of that church, as much as

that church itself was withdrawn from the enmity of Pharaoh. And, it is to be noted, it was that very church herself which afterwards, when seated at Jerusalem, forsook her Lord and Husband, and committed adultery with the kings of the earth, and became drunk with the blood of the saints. It would seem then that we must not understand the woman of the invisible spiritual church of Christ, nor her flight into the wilderness of the withdrawal of God's true servants from the eyes of the world. They indeed have been just as much withdrawn from the eyes of the world at all times, and will continue so till the great manifestation of the sons of God. I own that, considering the analogies and the language used, I am much more disposed to interpret the persecution of the woman by the dragon of the various persecutions by Jews which followed the Ascension, and her flight into the wilderness of the gradual withdrawal of the church and her agency from Jerusalem and Judea, finally consummated by the flight to the mountains on the approaching siege, commanded by our Lord Himself. And then the river which the dragon sent out of his mouth after the woman might be variously understood,—of the Roman armies which threatened to sweep away Christianity in the wreck of the Jewish nation,—or of the persecutions which followed the church into her retreats, but eventually became absorbed by the civil power turning Christian,—or of the Jewish nation itself, banded together against Christianity wherever it appeared, but eventually itself becoming powerless against it by its dispersion and ruin,—or again, of the influx of heretical opinions from the Pagan philosophies which tended to swamp the true faith. I confess that not one of these seems to me satisfactorily to answer the conditions: nor do we gain anything by their combination. But anything within reasonable regard for the analogies and symbolism of the text seems better than the now too commonly received historical interpretation, with its wild fancies and arbitrary assignment of words and figures. As to the time indicated by the 1260 days or $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, the interpretations

given have not been convincing, nor even specious. We may observe thus much in this place: that if we regard this prophecy as including long historic periods, we are driven to one of two resources with regard to these numbers: either we must adopt the year-day theory (that which reckons a day for a year, and consequently a month for thirty years,—and should reckon a year for 360 or 365 years), or we must believe the numbers to have merely a symbolical and mystical, not a chronological force. If [and this second alternative is best stated in an inverse form] we regard the periods mentioned as to be literally accepted, then the prophecy cannot refer to long historic periods, but must be limited to a succession of incidents concentrated in one place and space of time either in the far past or in the far future. Of all prophecies about which these questions can be raised, the present is the one which least satisfactorily admits of such literal interpretation and its consequences. Its actors, the woman and the dragon, are beyond all controversy mystical personages: one of them is expressly interpreted for us to be the devil: respecting the other there can be little doubt that she is the Church of God: her seed being, as expressly interpreted to be, God's Christian people. The conflict then is that between Satan and the church. Its first great incident is the birth and triumph of the Son of God and of man. Is it likely that a few days or years will limit the duration of a prophecy confessedly of such wide import? I own it seems to me that this vision, even if it stood alone, is decisive against the literal acceptation of the stated periods. Rejecting that, how do we stand with regard to the other alternative in its two forms? Granting for the moment the year-day principle, will it help us here? If we take the flight into the wilderness as happening at any time between the Ascension, A. D. 30, and the destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. 70, 1260 years will bring us to some time between A. D. 1290 and 1330: a period during which no event can be pointed out as putting an end to the wilderness-state of the church. If again we enlarge our limit for the former event,

and bring it down as late as Elliott does, *i. e.*, to the period between the fourth and seventh centuries, we fall into all the difficulties which beset his most unsatisfactory explanation of the man-child and his being caught up to God's throne, and besides, into this one: that if the occultation of true religion [the condition of the invisible church] was the beginning of the wilderness-state, then either the open establishment of the Protestant churches was the end of the wilderness-state of concealment, or those churches are no true churches: either of which alternatives would hardly be allowed by that author. And if on the other hand we desert the year-day principle, and say that these defined and constantly recurring periods are not to be pressed, but indicate only long spaces of time thus pointed out mystically or analogically, we seem to incur danger of missing the prophetic sense, and leaving unfixed that which apparently the Spirit of God intended us to ascertain. And the dragon was wroth at the woman and departed (from his pursuit of her) to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. Notice as important elements for the interpretation: (1) That the woman has seed besides the man-child who was caught up to God's throne [for this is the reference of *the rest*], who are not only distinct from herself, but who do not accompany her in her flight into the wilderness: (2) That those persons are described as being they who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus: (3) That during the woman's time of her being fed in the wilderness, the dragon is making war, not against her, but against this remnant of her seed: (4) That by the form of expression here, descriptive of habit, and occurring at the breaking off of the vision as regards the general description of the dragon's agency, it is almost necessarily implied, that the woman while hidden in the wilderness from the dragon's wrath, goes on bringing forth sons and daughters thus described. If I mistake not, the above considerations are fatal to the view which makes the flight of the woman into the

wilderness consist in the withdrawal of God's true servants from the world and from open recognition. For thus she must be identical with this remnant of her seed, and would herself be the object of the dragon's hostile warfare, at the very time when, by the terms of the prophecy, she is safely hidden from it. I own that I have been led by these circumstances to think whether after all the woman may represent, not the invisible church of God's true people which under all conditions of the world must be known only to Him, but the true visible Church; that Church which in its divinely prescribed form as existing at Jerusalem was the mother of our Lord according to the flesh, and which continued as established by our Lord and His Apostles, in unbroken unity during the first centuries, but which as time went on was broken up by evil men and evil doctrines, and has remained, unseen, unrealized, her unity an article of faith, not of sight, but still multiplying her seed, those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus, in various sects and distant countries, waiting the day for her comely order and oneness again to be manifested—the day when she shall 'come up out of the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved': when our Lord's prayer for the unity of His being accomplished, the world shall believe that the Father has sent Him. If we are disposed to carry out this idea, we might see the great realization of the flight into the wilderness in the final severance of the Eastern and Western churches in the seventh century, and the flood cast after the woman by the dragon in the irruption of the Mahometan armies. But this, though not less satisfactory than the other interpretations, is as unsatisfactory."

This frank expression of dissatisfaction shows how fully Alford realized the difficulty in the way of making the woman in this prophecy a symbol of the Church. His halting exegesis is the result of his failure to discern the true significance of the symbols. Assuming the woman to be the Church, he has fallen into the common error which is absolutely fatal to a consistent interpretation.

The dragon is a symbol, and we are not left in doubt as to its meaning. It represents "the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan." Michael is an archangel who is spoken of in the Old Testament as "a great prince" in specific relation to Daniel's people. The woman is *Israel.* Had Dean Alford seen the distinction between Israel and the Church, he would have escaped giving us the exceedingly lame and apologetic interpretation that we have considered. Let the woman represent, what she assuredly does, Israel; and let us keep in mind that we are at the time of Israel's restoration which is to be effected in the seven years of her incomplete history; and then her flight into the wilderness and her nourishment there for three years and six months can be taken literally, and brought into full accord with what Jesus says concerning this period when He warns them that shall be in Judea at that time to flee into the mountains. It is to be observed that our Lord's warning to flee follows the announcement of the desolation of the sanctuary, which occurs in the middle of the week. The sealed company of the seventh chapter preserves Israel *nationally* during the great tribulation which begins with the violation of the covenant in the middle of the week. This sealed company, constituting the nation, may flee to, and be nourished in, the wilderness during the twelve hundred and sixty days; while the rest of the Israelites remaining in Jerusalem would constitute "the *remnant* of her seed" that becomes the object of Satan's persecution. This interpretation is, in the judgment of the writer, equal to a certainty. It is, at any rate, clear and consistent. Symbols cannot be *forced* into representing anything but the definite object for which they stand. So long as we insist upon the woman representing the Church, there is no possible door of escape from hopeless confusion. With this in mind let us now look at the details of the picture set before us.

There is a conflict in heaven. Michael and his angels are at war with the dragon and his angels. The conflict ends in the expulsion of Satan and his rebellious hosts from heaven.

This is followed by a great voice in heaven proclaiming the glory of God and the authority of Christ. The heavens are called upon to rejoice over Satan's defeat. That Satan should have access to heaven is expressly counter to the common opinion of men. For a great many people Satan has altogether ceased to be. To a great many others the word merely conveys the idea of impersonal evil. Many who believe in the personality of Satan think of him as being confined in hell, and are shocked with the suggestion of his being allowed in heaven. Human opinion as to the propriety of things may be of some value, provided it does not conflict with the distinct revelation of Scripture. If it contradicts the Word of God, it is worse than worthless, it is *wicked*. There are certain revelations of Scripture, the propriety of which no man can question without an insufferable assumption of ability to question the ways of God. We have already considered the subject of Satan's origin and fall, and concerning this nothing further need be said. The Bible is not silent as to the present whereabouts of Satan. Uniform testimony is borne to the fact of his being at *liberty*. That good angels are ministering spirits among men is clearly evident from many passages of Scripture. These angels, too, are often the ministers of judgment. It is quite evident also that God at times receives reports from these angels, and decides questions that are beyond their wisdom. The court of God in session is set forth in the book of Job. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast

blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went from the presence of the Lord" (JOB 1:6-12).

We have a vision of another session of God's court, seen by the prophet Micaiah, who says: "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so" (1 KINGS 22:19-22).

Such passages of Scripture, however difficult of explanation, plainly testify to the fact that Satan and his lying spirits had at one time access to God. It is not strange, surely, to allow of the same possibility now. Satan's place and sphere of authority have already come under full discussion.

Our blessings, as the epistle to the Ephesians assures us, are "in heavenly places" whither also Christ has gone; and there, according to the same epistle, "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (EPH. 6:12, R. V.). Satan's power exercised thus in the heavenly places may be greater than is commonly believed. Jesus said to Peter: "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (LUKE 22:31). The word translated "desired" is, in the margin of the revised version, rendered "obtained you by asking" and this seems to imply the right of Satan to sift what purports to be God's wheat. In our

chapter of Revelation he is represented as the *accuser* of men before God. In this character he appears in the passage quoted from the book of Job, and the New Testament is consistent with the Old as to his place and character. His expulsion from heaven does not take place until the Church is removed from the sphere of earth, and no longer subject to his accusations.

The words of our Lord, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (LUKE 10:18), seem to refer to the expulsion from heaven now under consideration. Concerning this Daniel says: "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (DAN. 12:1).

This contest of Michael is in the interest of *Daniel's people.* The time of their restoration has come, and the expulsion of Satan and his host from heaven is the initial action that has that deliverance in view. After Satan is cast out a great voice is heard in heaven saying, "Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast out, who accused them before our God day and night; and they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life unto death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that tabernacle in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil is come down unto you having great wrath, knowing that he hath a short time."

The voice that celebrates this triumph is not identified for us, but is apparently the representative voice of the elders, who rejoice in the casting out of the accuser of their brethren. Believers in Christ are now subject to the accusation of Satan. When, at the end of the age, they shall be caught away to meet the Lord in the air, they shall be forever beyond the reach of

his accusing voice. Heaven, no longer disturbed by his presence, shall be at rest.

The *brethren* are further identified by the expression: "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life unto death." Though accused by Satan, and no doubt justly, their victory over him is grounded on the blood of the Lamb. Without that blood atoning for the sin of which they are accused the charges of Satan would have been irrefutable. By virtue of the blood they conquered. The *blood* gave them standing before God, and their testimony to its value is given as the ground of their victory. With the saints gathered home and glorified, no further accusation against them is possible, and Satan is cast out of heaven altogether. The earth, to which Satan comes, is in literal contrast with heaven, out of which he is cast. Peace reigns in heaven, though for a little while the conflict must necessarily rage upon the earth.

Let us take note of the utter infatuation of sin in its last manifestation. Satan had "great wrath, *knowing* that he hath a short time." With the clearest apprehension of what is before him, he is the more inflamed, and keeps up the hopeless contest, only adding the more to the awful weight that shall sink him in eternal doom. Knowing the evil and continuing in it is nothing less than moral suicide.

Cast unto the earth he immediately begins persecuting the woman who brought forth the male child, "and there were given to the woman two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is sustained a time and times and half a time, from the face of the serpent." How graciously God leads Israel to think of her deliverance from Egypt when He speaks of the *eagles' wings!*

Pharaoh is called by Ezekiel, "The great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers." When God brought the Israelites out of their bondage into the wilderness, He said: "Ye have

seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself" (Ex. 19:4). In that deliverance God had no helper. He alone brought them from under the oppressive world-power, and in such a way as to teach Israel that her salvation was altogether of Him. So in the days to come, when the final deliverance shall be accomplished, God shall allure her into the wilderness. How freely and beautifully they are assured of this by one of their own prophets. "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God" (Hos. 2:14-23).

Such is the blessed prospect in store for the outcast house of Israel. God has not forgotten them, and for them His love and faithfulness abides. Under the last persecution of

Satan there shall be a flight from Jerusalem as literal as the language here declares. The *flood,* cast out of the mouth of the serpent after the retreating woman, may easily represent one or more of the armies that are yet to encompass Jerusalem before the time of her final deliverance. It is equally intelligible to think of a literal desert into which these hunted Israelites shall flee. There they shall be sustained by the hand of the covenant-keeping God. The literal wilderness would be easily capable of bringing destruction upon the pursuing army.

Perhaps reference is made to this in the words: "The earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and drank up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth." The barren wilderness is without resource to preserve a nation's strength, and, while it proves a place of refuge for the hunted, it baffles the enemy in his pursuit of them.

The integrity of the nation is secured by the flight of the woman into the wilderness. The remnant of her seed which does *not* escape becomes the object of Satan's malice. The persecution is especially directed against those, who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus." This faithful "remnant" may be the fruit of the testimony borne by the two witnesses. Though apparently unsheltered from Satan's wrath, they are nevertheless under the protecting care of God. As already suggested, the sealed ones of the seventh chapter may constitute the company which is allured into the wilderness, while the martyrs under the beast constitute the remnant which is won for God through the testimony of the witnesses. This is perhaps of no great importance, except to indicate the distinction between the *woman,* representing the nation, and the *remnant of her seed* which becomes the final object of Satan's wrath.

There is a passage in Isaiah that seems to be in obvious connection with this. The prophet says: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indigna-

tion be overpast. In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea" (Is. 26:20, 27:1).

This gracious invitation follows Israel's repentance, and after they have made full confession of their utter nothingness. Their acknowledgment of sin and failure is followed by the glorious prediction: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Is. 26:19). After this follows the summons to *enter their chambers* that they may hide themselves there for a little while until the indignation shall be overpast.

When the tribulation is past, the *dragon* falls into the hands of God for judgment. This is immediately followed by the song of the vineyard restored. "In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Is. 27:2-6).

The various voices of prophecy blend in one harmonious testimony. Israel, not the Church, shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. The expulsion of Satan from heaven will be followed by the flight into the wilderness from which, after the indignation is past, Israel shall come up "leaning upon her beloved." Then Christ, in Millennial glory, shall come into inheritance of Solomon's "vineyard at Baal-hamon." But this comes only in response to Israel's prayer, "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices" (CANT. 8:14).

XXIII

DEIFICATION OF MAN

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as those of a bear, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. And [I saw] one of his heads as if it had been smitten unto death; and his deadly wound was healed; and all the earth wondered after the beast. And they worshiped the dragon because he gave authority to the beast: and they worshiped the beast, saying, Who is like the beast? and who is able to make war with him? And there was given him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and there was given to him authority to practice forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and those tabernacling in heaven. And it was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and authority was given to him over every tribe and people and tongue and nation; and all the dwellers upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb slain. If any one hath an ear, let him hear. If any one leadeth into captivity, he goeth into captivity. If any one shall kill with the sword, he must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.—(Chapter 13: 1-10.)

OUR attention is now turned to the instrumentalities employed by Satan in his persecution of the woman and the remnant of her seed. Everything at this point is in such obvious connection with the book of Daniel that commentators generally take note of it. Even with such help as Daniel gives, there is neither unanimity, nor certainty of conclusion among them that deny the fact of the restoration of the Roman empire during the last days. The clearest language possible as to this is apparently of no weight. The subject, nevertheless, is of sufficient importance to be

worthy of the most careful examination. If Daniel and Revelation are covering common ground, then no theory is of any value that admits of any discrepancies between them.

Emerging from the obscurity so largely due to the common theory of interpretation Archdeacon Farrar says: "In the vision of the Wild Beast from the Sea, St. John intimates, as clearly as any Apocalypse could possibly intimate, that he is speaking of Rome and Nero. He describes this Wild Beast by sixteen distinctive marks, every one of which points to Rome and Nero, and most of them to Nero only.*

Possibly those of us that have tried to follow him are not willing to admit that his marks of identification are as perspicuous in their reference to Nero as he believes them to be. That *Rome,* in some form or other, is brought before us in this vision, he—and everyone else—is obliged to admit. Beyond all controversy the beast, *as a whole,* is the Roman empire. That Nero is to be the imperial head of the empire, represented by the head that was wounded and afterwards healed, is an assertion that cannot be made in the same positive way. Furthermore, if *future* Rome is before us, then no fallen head of the past empire can be intended, unless we allow of his being summoned from the tomb. This theory, and in reference to Nero too, has been advocated by others beside Farrar, but a careful examination of every detail seems to exclude this, and to point to another who, incited by Satan, shall be raised to supremacy over the revived empire. But let us test our ground by comparing what Revelation gives us with the clear and unambiguous statements found in the book of Daniel. We have already considered the second chapter, but its manifest connection with what we have here justifies the reintroduction of it.

Nebuchadnezzar has a dream which, unfortunately for them who are called upon for interpretation, he cannot remember. When all the magicians fail, Daniel is called and to him God reveals in a vision of the night both the dream and the interpretation of it. The king's dream was this: "Thou, O king,

* *The Messages of the Books,* page 524.

sawest, and behold a great image. This image, which was mighty, and whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee: and the aspect thereof was terrible. As for this image, his head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron, and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them in pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art king of kings, unto whom the God of heaven hath given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the glory; and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee to rule over them all: thou art the head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee; and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that crusheth all these, shall it break in pieces and crush. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron doth not mingle with clay. And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in

pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure" (DAN. 2:31-45. R.V.).

Surely nothing could be expressed in language more plain. God reveals to the Babylonian king four successional kingdoms. His own empire, the Babylonian, was the first; to be followed by three others, the last of which was to be smitten by a *stone,* and this, in turn, was to become a *great mountain* and *fill the whole earth.* This stone that smites and displaces the fourth empire is a kingdom set up by the God of heaven, and there is sufficient evidence to show that this is the Messianic kingdom of Christ. To regard this kingdom as the Church is simply to introduce difficulties that do nothing less than void the entire prophecy.

Turning now to the seventh chapter of Daniel we have an apocalyptic vision in correspondence with Revelation. Let us give our careful attention to it.

"In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream and told the sum of the matters. Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven brake forth upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand upon two feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in his mouth between his teeth: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given

to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, terrible and powerful, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: It devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld at that time because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and he was given to be burned with fire. And as for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (DAN. 7:1-14 R.V.).

Before taking up the interpretation given to Daniel, let us note the correspondence between this vision and the one in Revelation. In the first place it is universally admitted that the four beasts in this vision of Daniel correspond exactly to the four empires represented in the image exhibited to Nebuchadnezzar. The four winds of heaven break forth upon the sea, after which the four beasts emerge. By unanimous con-

sent the sea in its restless commotion is the uniform Scriptural type of the nations in their restless surgings upon the earth. In Revelation the beast is seen rising also out of the sea. In both cases the beasts come upon the scene as the result of strife and turmoil among the nations. The first three beasts of Daniel are in appearance like a lion, a bear, and a leopard, respectively. The fourth beast is spoken of as altogether diverse from the first three. The beast in Revelation has the combined features of the *four beasts* of Daniel. He was "like unto a leopard, and his feet were as those of a bear, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion." This makes him *like* the *first three,* and yet the combination of these features in one beast makes him diverse from any one of them, and, at the same time, identifies him with the fourth beast. There is abundant proof to establish this claim.

The fourth beast of Daniel has ten horns. The beast of Revelation has also "ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy." Daniel says nothing of *the seven heads,* but Revelation does, and in another place gives us the inspired interpretation of them. On the other hand, Daniel speaks of a *little horn,* rising among ten, and subduing three of them. Revelation says nothing about this "little horn," but, according to Daniel, it "has a mouth speaking great things." Concerning the beast in Revelation, but in reference to one of his *heads,* it is said: "There was given him a mouth speaking great things." In this respect, at least, "the little horn" of Daniel is identical with the *healed head* of the beast of Revelation.

Now let us consider the inspired interpretation of Daniel's vision. "As for me Daniel, my spirit was grieved in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and pos-

sess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was diverse from all of them, exceeding terrible, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; and concerning the ten horns that were on his head, and the other horn which came up, and before which three fell; even that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings. And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High: and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and a half a time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Here is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my thoughts much troubled me, and my countenance was changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart" (DAN. 7: 15-28. R.V.).

We are by this interpretation taken altogether out of the realm of mere human opinion, and brought under the infallible leadership of the Spirit of God Himself. First of all, then, these great beasts, which are four, are *four kings,* which shall arise out of the earth. They represent, however, not simply

individual kings, but *kingdoms* over which they rule. This is manifest from the twenty-third verse where we read: "The fourth beast shall be a fourth *kingdom* upon earth, which shall be diverse from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces."

After the same fashion, interpreting the meaning of the image, Daniel says to Nebuchadnezzar: "*Thou* art the head of gold. And after thee shall arise another *kingdom* inferior to thee; and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth."

These four beasts, therefore, represent four successive kingdoms of which the first was the Babylonian empire. There is no debate whatever as to the identity of the succeeding three. Babylon was followed by Medo-Persia, this by Greece; and the fourth kingdom was Rome. We are interested solely in what is here revealed concerning the Roman empire.

Daniel inquires particularly about the ten horns of this fourth beast, and also concerning *the little horn* before which three fell. In answer to this he is told that the ten horns are ten kings which shall arise out of this fourth kingdom, that is, of course, out of the Roman empire. The little horn, he says, is another king who shall subdue three of the ten.

Let us now compare this with the terms descriptive of the first beast of Revelation. In order to establish the identity of this beast and Daniel's, it will be necessary for us to anticipate what is found in the seventeenth chapter of Revelation, where, without question, the same beast reappears. He has the same "seven heads and ten horns." The interpretation of these heads and horns is also given. "The seven heads are seven mountains whereupon the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh he must remain a little while." The seven mountains are, manifestly, the seven hills on which Rome is built. Both Daniel and Revelation have the Roman empire in view. But these seven heads speak also of *seven kings.* Five of these had fallen, and the sixth was in existence when

the revelation was given. The seventh head was to follow at a subsequent period not given.

The ten horns are declared to be: "Ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet, but receive authority as kings one hour with the beast." Here then, apparently, are the ten kings of which Daniel speaks. In both Daniel and Revelation these are connected with Rome. Rome as constituted by ten separate kingdoms under one imperial head is something history has told us nothing about. If, therefore, Rome in some form is here before us, as by universal agreement it is, it must be the Roman empire revived in the latter days. In fact, as we look more closely into what is here given us, it becomes more and more apparent that nothing short of this can by any possibility satisfy the terms found in these various expressions. Revelation, speaking of the seven heads, declares five to be fallen, one in existence, and another to come at some future time. These five fallen heads may, as we have already seen, represent the different forms of Roman government preceding the sixth or imperial form, which was in existence when Revelation was written. We are not concerned with the five fallen heads, nor with the one existing in the apostle's day. Our interest is alone in the seventh head, which, at the time of John's writing, had not yet come into existence.

If we turn now to the thirteenth chapter, we find that one of the heads was "as if it had been smitten unto death; and his deadly wound was healed." Now Rome declined and fell under the imperial form of government. If the seven heads represent forms of government, and the imperial form was the sixth, then it is apparent that Rome, having expired under the imperial or sixth head, has never as yet had a seventh. What is meant by the wounded head that is afterwards healed? Does it refer to the restoration of the Roman empire under one of its original forms of government? At first sight this would seem to be true. The Roman empire has long since passed from the earth. Its revival among the nations in the latter days is no mere speculation, but is absolutely demanded

by the terms of sacred prophecy. So far the Roman empire has had only six heads. When it appears again among the nations, it will be under the control of the seventh head.

It is further to be noticed, that the beast has *all* of his heads before one of them is wounded and the deadly wound healed. According to Daniel's prophecy a Roman prince makes a covenant with Israel for the seventieth week of her prophetic history. Without question, this prince is the seventh head of the beast of Revelation, as well as "the little horn" of Daniel. He comes upon the scene as "the rider of the white horse" when the first seal is broken. Later, he meets with a complete reversal, and is degraded from power, which is equivalent to a political death-stroke. There appears to be the collapse of royal or imperial authority under the fourth trumpet. This may well be the *wounding* of the seventh head. The deadly wound, however, is *healed,*—possibly through an alliance with the demon-possessed host of the sixth trumpet. Satan, finding in him the most available and best adapted instrument for the accomplishment of his purposes, employs devilish wisdom to effect the restoration to imperial power of this wounded head. This would explain what to most people has been so enigmatic.

"And the beast that was, and is not, even he is *the eighth,* and *is of the seven,* and goeth to destruction." As the imperial head of the revived empire he is, of necessity, *one of the seven.* Receiving the death-stroke, he ceases for a time to be. Revived from this, he becomes again the imperial head, and, by reason of this restoration to power, becomes *virtually* an eighth head. Being also the wounded seventh head, he can be rightly spoken of as *one of the seven.*

It is further said: "The beast which thou sawest, was, and is not, and is about to rise out of the abyss and go into destruction." These words, having reference to the entire beast, rather than to one of its heads, apply to the Roman empire restored. The "was" refers to a time in the past. The "not" speaks of the time of its nonexistence. The "rising out

of the abyss and going into destruction" refers to its *future existence* and overthrow. Putting together these various statements, we are justified in the belief, that the *fourth* kingdom, which must be in existence when the Son of man comes, is Rome. This kingdom is before us in the fourth beast of Daniel and the first beast of Revelation.

The interpretation of the horns and heads gives us specific features connected with the restoration of this kingdom. The ten horns are ten *kings*. (DAN. 7:24; REV. 17:12). Three of these kings shall be subdued by another represented by the "little horn" of Daniel and "the seventh head" of Revelation. This king shall in turn be overthrown, and for a time shall have no political existence. Under the energy of Satan power shall be restored to him, and he shall consolidate the ten kingdoms, and carry into effect the prophetic utterances in reference to him. "He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High." That is, he shall defy God and exalt himself. "He shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time." This corresponds to the latter half of Daniel's week, or three years and a half of the great tribulation. Revelation adds further to this by saying: "All the world wondered after the beast." Combining in his kingdom the characteristic features that were manifest in the three great empires preceding him, it will not be difficult to conceive of such a rapid extension of his kingdom as to command the wonder of the world. We are plainly told that "the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority." Under his command are all the resources of Satan. Satan, after showing Jesus all the kingdoms of the world said to Him: "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it" (LUKE 4:6). Jesus repudiated Satan and his offer, but here is one who in the latter days shall be willing to become the instrument of Satan's last and most awful rebellion against God. Clothed with such authority and wisdom

and power as Satan shall be able to confer upon him, it would be strange indeed if the world, not knowing whence these are derived, should wonder after him. It says: "They worshiped the beast, saying, Who is like the beast? and who is able to make war with him?"

At last we have before us the apotheosis towards which the boasted wisdom of this world is so steadily moving. This man shall be exalted to a rank among the gods and as such he shall be worshiped. Little indeed shall his dupes realize that they are in fact worshiping Satan by whom he is instigated. There is to be "given him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies," and he shall be given "authority to practise forty and two months." The "forty and two months" define the limit of, and are identical with, the time of Israel's great tribulation. His blasphemy is directed against God and His tabernacle, and against them who, safe beyond the reach of his malice, are already tabernacled in heaven.

And it shall be given him to "make war with the saints, and to overcome them." The saints here spoken of are upon the earth, and are the remnant of Israel against which the war of the beast is directed. The authority of the beast extends also over "every tribe and people and tongue and nation; and all the dwellers upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb slain." Solemnly, as in the letters to the seven churches, the admonition is given, "If any one hath an ear, let him hear." It is the warning of God against the deification and worship of man to which the sure word of prophecy points, and to which the world is so recklessly moving. The saints that shall be living at the time are exhorted to exhibit patience. They are not to meet the beast in armed resistance. They are simply to wait for God, and for deliverance wrought out for them by Him alone. "If any one leadeth into captivity, he goeth into captivity. If any one shall kill with the sword, he must be killed with the sword." Retributive judgment is on the track of the beast and shall overtake him and

all his followers. "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (MATT. 26:52). Such is the word of our Lord and such is the language of prophecy. "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee" (Is. 33:1). The law of retaliation, written in the statute book of God, has never been repealed. "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." This law without abatement shall be enforced against the beast. "The judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him" (DAN. 7:26-27).

XXIV

THE LAST DELUSION

And I saw another beast rising out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causeth the earth and those that dwell in it to worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great signs, so as even to cause fire to come down out of heaven unto the earth in sight of men. And he leadeth astray those that dwell upon the earth, on account of the signs which were given him to do in the presence of the beast, saying to those that dwell upon the earth that they should make an image to the beast, who had the wound with a sword, and lived; and it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be slain. And he causeth all, small and great, and rich and poor, and free and bond, that they should give them a mark on their right hand or upon their forehead; and that no one should be able to buy or sell, except he had the mark, the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred sixty and six.—(Chapter 13: 11-18.)

IN contrast with the first beast, no certain marks of identification are given to this second one. The ten horns of the first beast are said to be kings or kingdoms, but regarding the two horns on the second beast we are simply told, " he had two horns *like a lamb.*" This resemblance to a lamb is not without the deepest significance. From the fifth chapter to the close of the book the word " Lamb " is introduced so frequently, and in such unquestioned application to the Lord Jesus that if the word be used in any other application than to Him, it must be deemed of the utmost importance. The book is opened by the Lamb. (REV. 5:6). The elders fall before the Lamb. (REV. 5:8). Adoration is paid to the Lamb. (REV. 5:13).

Men hide themselves from the wrath of the Lamb. (REV. 6:16). Garments are made white in the blood of the Lamb. (REV. 7:14). Names are written in the book of the Lamb. (REV. 13:8). On Mount Zion stands a Lamb. (REV. 14:1). The redeemed follow the Lamb. (REV. 14:4). They sing the song of the Lamb. (REV. 15:3). The beast and his armies make war with the Lamb. (REV. 17:14). There is a marriage and marriage-supper of the Lamb. (REV. 19:7-9). The foundations of the city are inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (REV. 21:14). In the new Jerusalem the temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. (REV. 21:22). The water of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. (REV. 22:1).

This constant recurrence of the word "Lamb" indicates its deep significance, and its introduction in any other connection should be regarded as having a corresponding importance. Whatever he may represent, this beast rising out of the earth has two horns like a lamb. The absence of the definite article should caution us against a too hasty conclusion. The words, "like a lamb" have led many to suppose that antichrist is intended; but of this we are not so sure. "The Lamb," who occupies such a controlling place throughout the book, has "*seven* horns" (REV. 5:6). The beast under consideration has but *two*. The likeness, therefore, seems to be to an ordinary lamb and not *the* Lamb so conspicuous everywhere. No other feature is given us, except what is implied in the further statement that "he spake as a dragon." Though lamb-like in appearance, his speech bewrays him. He is not the dragon, but his agent for accomplishing the exaltation and worship of the first beast with whom his authority is coextensive. He rises, not from the sea, but from the *earth*. The earth is the natural figure of Israel, as the sea is of the nations. He is called the "false prophet" in the nineteenth chapter where it is affirmed that he, together with the beast, is cast alive into the lake of fire.

"He causeth the earth and those that dwell in it to worship

the first beast whose deadly wound was healed." He is not only clothed with great authority, but his influence over men is accredited by the great signs that he is permitted to do. He can cause fire to come down from heaven to earth in sight of men. In his ability to do this there is a manifest resemblance to the power of Elijah, who in calling down fire from heaven vindicated the majesty and glory of the God of Israel against all claims of Baal. By these accrediting signs the second beast succeeds in inducing the dwellers on earth to worship an image of the first. All that refuse to worship the image of the beast are slain. Men of all rank, rich and poor, free and bond, are compelled to receive a mark upon their right hand, or upon their forehead, and, except this mark be on them, they are permitted neither to buy nor sell. This mark is declared to be the name of the beast, or the number of his name, and a concluding challenge is given to them that have understanding to count the number of the beast. It is declared to be the number of a *man* and is six hundred sixty and six.

It would be strange indeed if Scripture elsewhere had nothing to say concerning one that occupies among men in the last days such a commanding position. The question is, What relation, if any, does this second beast sustain to the predicted antichrist? The apostle John,—he alone uses the word "antichrist,"—says: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (I. JOHN 2:18). Again he says: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (I. JOHN 2:22). In another place: "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (I. JOHN 4:3). Finally: "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist" (II. JOHN 7).

These are the only passages in which the specific term antichrist is found, and a summary of them seems to be, that many antichrists were already abroad, and that *the* antichrist should come, and his appearing would mark the "last time."

In reference to the same subject Jesus says: "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (MATT. 24:5). Respecting the time of trouble prior to His coming He further says: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (MATT. 24:23-24). These words clearly intimate a difference between false Christs and false prophets. False prophets would be the precursors of *the* final false Christ. It has been maintained by perhaps the majority of commentators that the first beast of Revelation is the antichrist. With equal confidence it has been asserted by others that the second beast is the antichrist. It is not a difficult matter to determine which, if only the various passages that refer to antichrist be carefully considered. The title, "false prophet," given to the second beast, argues at once in favor of the first being antichrist.

From the early Fathers to the Reformation there was but little diversity of opinion about antichrist. All the early Christians expected the appearance of a *personal* antichrist. The common belief of the first three hundred and fifty years is expressed in Jerome's *Commentary on Daniel,* where he says: "Let us say that which all ecclesiastical writers have handed down, viz., that at the end of the world, when the Roman Empire is to be destroyed, there will be ten kings, who will divide the Roman world among them; and there will arise an eleventh little king, who will subdue three of the ten kings, that is, the king of Egypt, of Africa, and of Ethiopia, as we shall hereafter show; and on these having been slain, the seven other kings will also submit. 'And behold,' he says, 'in the ram were the eyes of a man'—this is that we may not suppose

him to be a devil or demon, as some have thought, but a man in whom Satan will dwell utterly and bodily—'and a mouth speaking great things;' for he is 'the man of sin, the son of perdition, who sitteth in the temple of God, making himself as God.'"

The Reformers, almost without exception, believed the pope and his system to be antichrist. For many years succeeding the Reformation this was the common view. The Scripture references are so positively opposed to this that but few of its advocates remain. Some have argued that the predictions concerning the antichrist have already been fulfilled. Some Romanists were glad to seize upon this as an argument against the application of an apocalyptic beast to the papal system, while others of them declared antichrist to be either Protestantism or Rationalism.

Antiochus Epiphanes, to whom undoubted reference is made in the eleventh chapter of Daniel, is regarded, almost unanimously, as a clear *type* of antichrist. It is also generally admitted that Daniel's vision goes beyond Antiochus, and speaks plainly of the antichrist of the last days. The passage, universally accepted as referring to antichrist, is as follows: "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods: and he shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his place shall he honour the god of fortresses: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. And he shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a strange god; whosoever acknowledgeth him he will increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for a price" (DAN. 11:36-40. R. V.).

The personality of this king is of course unquestioned, and

this has an important bearing on the whole subject. It has been argued by some that a *personal* antichrist can by no possibility be identified with the "little horn" of Daniel seven, nor with the first beast of Revelation, because these represent *polities* and not *persons*. Let us, however, examine this. It is quite true, that the fourth beast of Daniel's vision and the first beast of Revelation represent *polities* when viewed in their complete and composite character. It must be remembered, however, that the ten horns on the beast in Daniel represent kingdoms or *kings*. The eleventh horn is, in all certainty, an *individual king* by whom the three others are overthrown. The little horn is not the whole beast. The beast in its entirety is a polity, but the "little horn" is an individual king. In the same way the first beast of Revelation must be regarded in its complete and composite character. It represents the whole Roman empire. The head that was wounded and healed is not the whole empire, but an *individual king* corresponding to the "little horn" of Daniel.

Now the question is, Are we to regard the "willful king" of the eleventh chapter of Daniel as identical with the "little horn," as well as with the seventh head of the first beast of Revelation?

Before attempting to answer this question let us compare the description of this willful king with that given us of the "man of sin." Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is now present; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that

which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 THESS. 2:1-12. R. V.).

Now, comparing Daniel's statement with Paul's, we are forced to the conclusion that they refer to one and the same person. The willful king exalts himself and magnifies himself "above every God": the man of sin "opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God." The willful king does "according to his will": the man of sin is defined as "the lawless one."

The willful king is an apostate *Jew*. "Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any God: for he shall magnify himself above all." "The gods (*Elohim*) of his fathers" is an expression that undoubtedly refers to the God of the patriarchs, even Jehovah. The "desire of women" is an expression that refers to the historic desire among women in Israel to be the mother of the Messiah, the Seed Who was to bruise the serpent's head; so the willful king's disregard of this "desire of women" marks him out as one in defiant opposition to the Messiah. Antichrist shall deny the Father and the Son. In the combined features of "the willful king" and "the man of sin" we have presented to us the one in whom shall be headed up the apostasy of the last days. Paul declares "the mystery of iniquity" was

working in his day. There was, however, a restraint upon it, the removal of which would open the way for the last apostasy in which should be revealed "the man of sin." The restraint upon the mystery of iniquity is, beyond all controversy, that of the Holy Spirit. The body of the believer, as we are assured by the apostle, constitutes the temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells. When believers are removed from the earth at the appearing of the Lord, the restraining presence of the Holy Spirit shall no longer hold in check the mystery of iniquity, and then shall culminate the world's apostasy, and bring upon the scene the man of sin.

Jesus said to the Jews: "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (JOHN 5:43).

He is evidently referring to the one who, in the latter days of Israel's trouble, shall present himself to the nation as their king, and be accepted as the Christ. This appears to be the same person spoken of by Daniel as "the willful king." There is also a close resemblance between the second beast of Revelation and the "man of sin." The latter's coming is "according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing." So also of the second beast it is written: "And he doeth great signs, so as even to cause fire to come down out of heaven unto the earth in sight of men. And he leadeth astray those that dwell upon the earth, on account of the signs which were given him to do in the presence of the beast." On the other hand it should be noted that the object of the second beast is to secure the world's worship of the *first* beast. Of this first beast he makes a speaking image, and the death penalty is imposed upon those who refuse to worship it. All this shows the *first* beast of Revelation to be the object of *worship,* and consequently identifies him not only with "the willful king," but also with "the man of sin."

These passages are thus seen in full harmony, and lead us

to the conviction that the first beast is the antichrist. The second beast is the false prophet, and is so named in the nineteenth chapter, where he is spoken of as sharing the doom of "the beast."

The antichrists already abroad in John's day were to be succeeded by others through the generations, and finally the spirit of them all was to be headed up in *the one antichrist.* The many false prophets existing in all generations were likewise to be succeeded by *the false prophet.*

This false prophet shall represent himself as "that prophet" foretold by Moses (DEUT. 18:15, 18). The Jews were looking for such a prophet as distinguished from Messiah. (JOHN 1:19-21).

These two agents, antichrist and the false prophet, under the immediate control of Satan, bring the prophecies of Daniel and Paul and Revelation to an issue. It requires both beasts of Revelation to fill out Paul's declaration concerning the man of sin.

The antichrist, then, is one who shall be revealed in a time of general apostasy immediately after the removal of the Church. The false prophet shall at the same time appear and announce to the Israelites that the long-expected and conquering Messiah has come.

Neander says: "The Jews expected a Messiah who should be armed with a miraculous power in their behalf, free them from severe bondage, execute a severe penalty upon the theocratic people, and make them masters of the world in a universal empire whose glory it was their special delight to set forth."

This is the uniform testimony of all biblical expositors. Such was the hope cherished by the apostles themselves. Messianic expectations of this kind were fully justified by the plainest declarations in the Old Testament Scriptures. The kingdom of Christ in universal supremacy over all kingdoms of the world was the prophetic burden of the ages. Every Jew had a perfect right to expect the Messiah to manifest Himself

in this character. A summary of their expectation is found in Gabriel's announcement to Mary: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (LUKE 1:32-33).

This promise of Gabriel still waits for its fulfillment, even though rationalistic critics may say: "It is one of the promises that has never been fulfilled, and that in the nature of the case never can be."

The theocratic people of the Old Testament were looking for a *King,* and had they received the King when He came, the kingdom would have been established according to the prophecies. In view of His rejection and death, (which was, however, according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God"), Israel as a nation had already been given over to "be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Christ came in His Father's name, and Israel would not receive Him; another shall come in his own name, and him they will receive. In the victorious career of the imperial head of the revived Roman empire, they shall see that which answers to the conquering Messiah for whom they have waited through the ages. The false prophet, energized by the wisdom and power of Satan, shall seduce them into the belief that the Messiah has come. The world shall wonder after this conquering beast, and his claim to divine worship shall be sustained in the eyes of men by the wonders and signs attesting the false prophet. "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II. THESS. 2:10-12. R. V.).

The foremost figure in opposition to God and Christ is the first beast of Revelation and not the second. He shall be received by the great mass of Israelites as the Christ pre-

dicted by Isaiah, coming "from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength" (Is. 63:1).

In this delusion they shall be urged on by the false prophet. He shall apparently be under no restraint of God during the forty-two months given him to practice. At the end of that period, (which is also the terminal of Daniel's seventieth week), the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies shall be gathered together to make war against One who "hath upon his garment and upon his thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords" (REV. 19:16). This shall bring to an end the long conflict between good and evil. The beast shall be taken, and with him the false prophet who wrought miracles before him, and they together shall be cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Concerning the *number* of the beast there have been many suggestions, but they are vague and unsatisfactory. The number six is the measure of man's ability to labor. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work." It is the sign of his creature condition. Six hundred sixty and six is the number of the beast. This creature, though worshiped as a god, is but a man. His number betrays him.

The words "here is wisdom" carry us again to the closing words in Daniel. "The words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (DAN. 12:9-10). "Here is wisdom," says John. "The wise shall understand," says Daniel. Concerning this Grant suggestively says: "'The wise' and 'they that understand' are in Hebrew the same word, the *maskilim*, and remind us again of certain psalms that are called *maskil* psalms, an important series of psalms in this connection, four of which (LII.-LV.) describe the wicked one of this time and his following; while the thirty-second speaks of forgiveness and a hiding-place in God, the forty-second comforts those cast out from the sanc-

tuary, and the forty-fifth celebrates the victory of Christ and His reign and the submission of the nations. Again, the seventy-fourth pleads for the violated sanctuary; the seventy-eighth recites the many wanderings of the people from their God; the seventy-ninth is another mourning over the desolation of Jerusalem; the eighty-eighth bewails their condition under the broken law; and the eighty-ninth declares the sure mercies of David. The one hundred and forty-second is the only other *maskil* psalm. Moll may well dispute Hengstenberg's assertion that these psalms are special instruction for the *Church.* On the other hand, the mere recital of them in this way may convince us that they furnish the very keynote to Israel's condition in the time of the end, and may well be used to give such instruction to the remnant amid the awful scenes of the great tribulation. In Revelation it will not be doubtful, I think, to those who attempt to consider it, that we have in this place a *nota bene* for the *maskilim.*"

If we cannot identify the *man,* we can by patient investigation of these Psalms bring into clear view the circumstances under which he shall be manifested. With these final instrumentalities of Satan fully before us, events follow each other in rapid succession until the consummation is reached.

CHAPTER XXV

THE LAMB STANDING UPON MOUNT ZION

And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing upon mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name and his Father's name written upon their foreheads. And I heard a voice out of heaven as a voice of many waters, and as a voice of great thunder; and the voice which I heard was as of harpers harping with their harps; and they sing as it were a new song before the throne and before the four living beings and the elders; and no one was able to learn the song except the hundred and forty and four thousand who were purchased from the earth. These are they that were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb wherever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no falsehood, for they are without blame.—(Chapter 14: 1-5.)

THE Lamb standing upon Mount Zion is God's first and last intention. This, too, is brought to our notice at a time when the whole power of the enemy is seen in open opposition to it. The word "Zion" is of such controlling significance in the prophetic utterances of the past, that we must regard it as having—though found only in this one vision—a corresponding importance in Revelation.

Zion was the fortress chosen by David for his royal residence, and it became thereafter permanently associated with his name. It was chosen also by Jehovah as the place of His abode. "The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Ps. 132: 13-14).

Its importance lies in this choice by Jehovah rather than in its connection with David. It is to be the royal residence of the King of whom David was but the typical representative. Of this abundant proof is furnished by the thirty different

Psalms wherein the word "Zion" occurs, and in which there is given us a clear and definite conception of the Messiah. He was to be a King with a royal residence on Mount Zion, and this Zion was to be no other than the literal one on which the palace of David stood. Let us look briefly at these Psalms.

In the second the nations are viewed as rebels against God and His Christ. But without avail. Despite all opposition the decree goes forth: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

In the ninth the supremacy of Jehovah is represented. He judges the world in righteousness, and, establishing His dwelling in Zion, becomes the theme of His people's praises.

By the fourteenth man is exhibited, and the depth of his iniquity sounded. In God alone there is hope. Salvation must come out of Zion when "Jehovah bringeth back the captivity of his people." Then, "Jacob shall exult, Israel shall be glad."

In the twentieth the sanctuary and Zion are both brought before us. The former naturally connects with the priesthood of Christ, while the latter is as elsewhere the seat of royal power. The sanctuary in the midst of Israel has been so persistently insisted upon as being only a *figure* of the true, that any literal interpretation of it is considered gross and materialistic, and without application to any future restoration of Israel. Christ, however, is both Priest and King—"A Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." The reign of peace shall be established in righteousness, and the Ruler shall be a Royal Priest. During this Millennial reign Mount Zion shall be the place of His throne, and the sanctuary the place of His priestly service.

In the forty-eighth Mount Zion is declared: "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth." This, plainly, is after Jehovah has established it for ever. With God "known in her palaces," Zion becomes a mighty bulwark against all Israel's enemies. Kings assemble; they pass by altogether; they look upon her majestic walls and towers, and then hasten away in fear.

In the fiftieth the whole earth is called upon to hear Jehovah. He has made Zion the habitation of His glory, and it becomes "the perfection of beauty," out of which the light of glory shines.

In the fifty-first there is a plea from a broken and contrite heart for the restoration of Zion. "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar." Such words show that the Psalm is strictly prophetic, and they testify to the national confession that must precede the restoration and blessing.

In the fifty-third there is a repetition of the longing expressed in the fourteenth. Such longings were justified by the clearest predictions, and they testified to an unfaltering faith in their fulfillment.

In the sixty-ninth is voiced the same unchangeable conviction that "God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession. The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: and they that love his name shall dwell therein."

In the seventy-fourth the plea is made that Zion could not be perpetually forsaken because of Jehovah's covenant. They were the "sheep" of His pasture and could therefore plead: "Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt."

In the seventy-sixth there is a vision of the Millennial reign of peace. "In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion." Melchizedek was king of Salem, and a priest of the most high God. This Psalm pictures the *true* Melchizedek, with his tabernacle in Salem and his dwelling place in Zion.

In the seventy-eighth Israel's history is traced from the Exodus to the time of David, with which it closes. In David is seen the glory of a Greater than he. Sovereign grace

comes in after the people's long-continued failure. "Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach. Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: but chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he hath established for ever."

The eighty-fourth shows the pilgrims of God who, passing through the valley of Baca, go from strength to strength until they appear "before God in Zion." Israel, indeed, is on a long pilgrimage through a vale of tears; passing through it—though far from home as yet—until at the end they enter the gates of Zion, and are at rest.

In the eighty-seventh Zion is set before us as the object of Jehovah's love. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Is He contrasting the present "dwellings of Jacob" with that fixed abode of His love to which He will allure them? When established there in grace, glorious things shall be spoken of the royal "city of God."

The ninety-seventh speaks of the presence of the King. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof." Clouds and darkness vanish before Him. The world is filled with glory. "Zion *heard,* and was glad."

In the ninety-ninth Zion is represented as having become the royal metropolis of the world. The Psalm ends in a call for universal praise. "Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy."

The one hundred and second records the cry of one stricken of God. It is the voice of the King, who, by the way of suffering, reaches the throne. Zion shall be raised from its ruins, and Jehovah shall appear in glory.

The one hundred and tenth shows the rejected King seated at the right hand of Jehovah until His enemies shall be made

His footstool. In Zion His strength shall be manifested, and the sentence established: "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies."

In the one hundred and twenty-fifth Zion is set forth as the symbol of the immutable stability of those who put their trust in God.

The one hundred and twenty-eighth makes a plea against the haters of Zion, who, in that hatred, manifest opposition to the divine grace to be revealed in the future restoration of Zion.

In the one hundred and thirty-second Zion and the King constitute the theme throughout. The installation of the ark in Zion was of the greatest prophetic significance. This will come before us again in considering another Psalm that appears to have been written in connection with that event. The eternal purpose is revealed in the closing verses. "The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish."

The one hundred and thirty-third shows the royal dwelling in the midst of Zion, which is refreshed by the dews of Hermon descending upon it.

The one hundred and thirty-fourth represents the people as in the sanctuary. Their praises continue the night through, until the morning breaks, and Jehovah blesses them out of Zion.

The one hundred and thirty-fifth speaks of their being at the end of their long history—*with God*. The night is over, and the day has come, and all Israel is exhorted to praise Him who dwelleth in Zion.

The one hundred and thirty-seventh gives the cry of the

Babylonian captives, who cannot sing the song of Zion when it has become to them but a memory of the place where God had manifested His presence. But Zion is forgotten, neither of them, nor of God.

The one hundred and forty-sixth celebrates the glory of Jehovah as "the Mighty One of Jacob." The exultant cry is: "Thy God, O Zion, shall reign for ever to all generations. Hallelujah." The God of Jacob is the God of sovereign grace. Grace, not creature merit, insures the restoration of Zion, and a perpetual reign of righteousness.

The one hundred and forty-seventh is the Psalm of the Royal Presence. The King is in Zion, and He has strengthened the bars of her gates, and blessed her children within her, and brought prosperity within her borders. These are the effects that follow the entrance of the King.

The one hundred and forty-ninth, where Zion is mentioned for the last time in the Psalms, begins with a *Hallelujah.* Israel is called upon to rejoice, and the children of Zion to be glad in their King. Zion is the place of His throne. He now ascends it, and the summons is given to "sing unto Jehovah a new song." It is, in fact, the *new song* learned from the harpers in heaven by the hundred and forty and four thousand upon Mount Zion.

This testimony, taken from these Psalms of Zion, is abundantly confirmed by other Psalms, and also by the prophets. Isaiah has spoken in language so plain that no one would think of denying the literal force of it, except for escaping the necessity of giving Christ a place of royal residence here upon earth. Look, for example, at the following passage: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his

ways and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Is. 2:1-4).

Though we are expressly told that this concerns *Judah* and *Jerusalem,* commentators in general persistently ignore the force of what follows, and tell us that "the mountain of the Lord's house" means "the Church, the true Zion, which is the antitype of the existing Zion, and is therefore given its material attributes." After this fashion the Word of God is constantly bereft of its true meaning, and the result is, that Mount Zion, as the royal seat of Christ, is denied Him by those who profess to be His friends.

Micah, the contemporary of Isaiah, has given us the same prophecy. It is freely rendered in *The Messages of the Earlier Prophets,* by Sanders and Kent, as follows: "In the distant future the temple mount shall be exalted above all the earth, every nation shall acknowledge Jehovah's law. From every quarter they shall flock to Jerusalem to be instructed in the true principles and practices of religion. Warfare will then come to an end, for even the most distant nations will accept Jehovah's arbitration in their disputes. The weapons of war will be converted into implements of husbandry, the science of warfare will be forgotten, men shall everywhere dwell in secure possession of their property."

To read the Church in these prophecies of Isaiah and Micah, and to claim any adequate fulfillment by her, is nothing less than a deliberate perversion of plain speech.*

What is to be gained by denying the literal force of language given us in these and kindred passages? If Christ is coming to earth to reign, what objection can be urged against His

*For other perspicuous passages in Isaiah referring to the word "Zion" see, CHAPS. 4:2-6; 24:20-23; 35:1-10; 52:1-10; 60:1-14:

having a place of royal residence? He came to the world once, and was crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross. Shall we explain away the infallible word that declares He will come again to be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords? Shall His coronation take place in the realms of the air or behind closed doors beyond the sight of His enemies? The world would have it even so, but God has ordained otherwise.

Look, for example, at the prophecy in the third chapter of Joel, where the harvest and the vintage are before us. The prophet says: "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem." Pusey, in common with all others, is compelled to see the literal coming of Christ in this passage, but he tells us little to the point about Zion. He says: "*And shall utter his voice from Jerusalem, i. e.,* either from His throne aloft in the air above the Holy City, or from the heavenly Jerusalem, out of the midst of the tens of thousands of His holy angels, and saints, who shall come with Him."

Why does he think it necessary to etherealize Zion and Jerusalem? Has Christ been so banished from the earth that even His friends shall deny Him a place of royal residence when He comes again? Is His return even to them an unwelcome thought? It surely is to the ungodly. Why make void the prophecies concerning Zion, and enthrone Him *in the air?* Even such an interpretation would not be accepted by the world, which does not want Him here under any circumstances.

In the famous passage in Hebrews, where Christianity is contrasted with Judaism, there is no confusion except such as interpreters introduce. "Ye are come," says the apostle, (1) "unto Mount Zion," and (2) "unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," and (3) "to innumerable hosts, the general assembly of angels," and (4) "the church of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven," and (5) "to God the Judge of all," and (6) "to the spirits of just men made perfect," and (7) "to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant," and (8) "to

the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than Abel" (HEB. 12:22-24. R. V. Marg.).

Mount Zion is the *keynote* of an ascending scale to its octave, the blood. The seven tones of this divine octave end in Jesus the mediator of a new covenant. The eighth, or octave note, is the *blood* which shall "wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion," (Is. 4:4), that Zion may put on her bridal attire as the royal city of the King. This octave will furnish the necessary notes for "the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb."

(1) "Mount Zion" is the place of the King's palace. From this divinely chosen abode He shall manifest His glory. (2) "The city of the living God" is the *heavenly* Jerusalem coming down, as we are assured, from heaven. It is the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (HEB. 11:10). (3) "The innumerable hosts, the general assembly of angels," are the hosts of the holy angels which shall attend the Son of man when he comes *in His glory*. (4) "The Church of the firstborn, who are enregistered in heaven," is the Church of Christ in contrast with Israel, the firstborn enregistered for the earth. (5) "God the Judge of all" is the Sovereign Awarder of all. (6) "The spirits of just men made perfect" are the spirits of the Old Testament saints who, "having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (HEB. 11:39-40). (7) "Jesus the mediator of a new covenant," we know. (8) "The blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than Abel" is the foundation of all blessing.

Such are the abiding blessings of Christianity, which we are called upon to contemplate by faith. They are as yet unseen, but "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (HEB. 11:1).

Mount Zion has title *to be*—distinct also from the Church. It cannot be spiritualized without coming into conflict with the avowed purpose of God. The decree has gone forth: "Yet

have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Ps. 2:6). It is blessed to realize that nothing can make that purpose void.

In the twenty-fourth Psalm Zion, if not named, is implied throughout. It is commonly agreed that the Psalm was written to celebrate the installation of the ark of God in Zion. We can well understand that the transfer of a box overlaid with pure gold to the royal city of David, however much that box might be revered as a sacred relic, would not be of sufficient importance to account for the majestic language used in the Psalm. The day when David brought the ark to Zion was, in the words of Dean Stanley, "the happiest day in David's life." To this statement, it may be added, that David that day did, in its typical import, the most significant deed of his life. Mount Zion, in all probability, was in the days of Abraham the royal city of Melchizedek. He was king of Salem and a priest of the most high God. Both Testaments unite in the declaration that Christ is "an high priest after the order of Melchizedek." In other words, He is a Priest *upon a throne.*

Very early among the Hebrews there grew up a conviction that the royal residence of Melchizedek would be the royal seat of Christ. When Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan, Mount Zion was a mighty fortress, but still in the hands of the Jebusites. During all the days of Joshua, as well as during the period of the Judges, and during the reign of Saul, the Israelites were not able to expel the occupants of this stronghold. When David became king over all Israel, God put it into his heart to capture that fortress, and to build his palace there. Under the leadership of Joab the defenders of the fortress were hurled over the wall, and Zion became from that time onward the royal city of David.

The ark, as we have before noticed, (Chapter 18), was the most sacred object among the Israelites. It was regarded by them as "the throne of God" in Israel. After the entrance of the nation into the land, the ark remained in the tabernacle at Shiloh until the corrupt times of Eli when the priesthood

failed. After its victorious vindication of God's power in the land of the Philistines, it remained in obscurity until David, having established his royal abode in Zion, brought it there.

It is generally admitted that the twenty-fourth Psalm was composed in reference to this event. The first part of the Psalm was probably sung as they approached the gates of the stronghold. Arriving there, the summons is given: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." As if questioning the dignity of him for whom entrance is thus demanded, there is returned the question, "Who is this King of glory?" And the answer is: "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." Again the summons is given: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Once more the question is asked, "Who is this King of Glory?" And the final answer comes: "The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."

The majesty of this language implies something of deeper import than the mere installation of the ark of God in Mount Zion. It points on to the future years when the earth and the world shall be claimed for Christ. The prophecy of the twenty-fourth Psalm was not fulfilled when Christ ascended from the Mount of Olives into heaven. The one hundred and tenth Psalm assures us that He took His seat at the right hand of God to wait until His enemies should be made His footstool. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Ps. 110:1). There are enemies still to be subdued though Christ be now enthroned in heaven. Mount Zion is still in the hands of the Jebusites, and the throne of Jehovah will not be established there, until the possessors of this stronghold have been cast out. The word "Jebusite" means "to tread down," and Christ has already told us that Jerusalem shall be *trodden down* of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

Every item of human history is helping to fill in the pro-

gramme mapped out by Almighty God. The time is coming when we shall hear the blessed words proclaimed: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Jehovah's title shall be urged on the ground of creation. "For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." Once more the old question shall be raised, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" And the answer, in plain reference to the Lord Jesus, shall be, "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."

Of the generation then living it shall also be said: "This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob." In that day Christ our Lord shall have His crown. Then the peremptory summons shall be given: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." The gates that have been so long shut shall then be opened: but they who guard them, as if unconscious still of the majesty of Him for whom entrance is demanded, raise the question, "Who is this King of glory?" Instantly the reply comes back: "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."

Grant has magnificently said, "The true David has come forth, the Christ in divine glory, and yet as the apocalyptic Rider on the white horse (REV. 19:11), the Warrior-King. He has shown Himself for the deliverance of His people and of the earth, 'Jehovah mighty in war.' The hostile powers of the nations have been smitten down, and the victory is achieved which has made peace—a long peace—possible. He has scattered the people that delight in war. The Jebusites, the 'treaders down,' are they that have been trodden down, and Zion is now to be His 'fixed' abode. So the reiterated appeal is made: 'Lift up your heads, ye gates; and lift them up, ye everlasting doors! and the King of glory shall come in.'

But from the gates yet again the question comes: 'Who is He, this King of glory?' As when of old, in the presence of the risen Lord, the disciples 'believed not for joy, and wondered,' so here the wondrous truth is too great for sudden admittance; it is not easy for the gates to lift themselves so high. But it must be: His grace will take no denial; with the magnificence of His universal title He will put down all resistance to His will. Listen, long desolate Zion! Listen, O earth, planet that hast been indeed a 'wanderer' among the stars, lost prodigal, darkened with the dust of thy servitude, and stranger to the heart of God: there is to be a merriment and gladness over thee, restored prodigal, brought back into the brotherhood of stars that shine forever. Listen: 'Jehovah of hosts! HE is the King of glory.'"

The King of Glory and the Lamb standing upon Mount Zion are one and the same blessed person. With Him, John sees, "A hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name and his Father's name written upon their foreheads."

Are these the same as the one hundred and forty-four thousand spoken of in the seventh chapter? This is the view ordinarily taken. Proof, however, is wanting to establish the identity. The one hundred and forty-four thousand, mentioned in the seventh chapter, are without question Israelites. But this cannot be affirmed of those seen standing upon Mount Zion. It is perhaps more consistent to regard these two companies as distinct from each other. It should be remembered, that after the flight of the woman into the wilderness, the dragon proceeded to make war with the remnant of her seed. There is a distinction between the *woman*, and *the remnant of her seed*. The woman escapes the tribulation, and the remnant of her seed passes through it. If the one hundred and forty-four thousand of chapter seven are sealed of God for the purpose of insuring the *national* preservation of Israel, and escape the tribulation by reason of their flight into the wilderness, then the remnant of her seed may represent the individual Israelites left in the city after the national flight. During the great tribu-

lation, through the instrumentality of the two witnesses and in other ways, the hearts of many shall be turned to God. In the second vision of chapter seven a "great multitude" is shown as having passed through the great tribulation. This multitude, apparently, is made up entirely of Gentiles, and is in contrast with the sealed company which is of literal Israel. May not the one hundred and forty and four thousand standing upon Mount Zion be constituted by the *remnant* that, though not previously sealed of God, yet survive the great tribulation, and receive open acknowledgment by the Lamb when He comes to establish His throne?

John says: "I heard a voice out of heaven as a voice of many waters, and as a voice of great thunder; and the voice which I heard was as of harpers harping with their harps; and they sing as it were a new song." It is the song of the one hundred and forty-ninth Psalm, sung by the remnant saved from the awful sorrows that shall overtake the world. It is sung in heaven. And the music of it sounded to the apostle, "as of harpers harping with their harps." The singers sing, "before the throne and before the four living beings and the elders." These singers are a separate company and they are in heaven; while the one hundred and forty and four thousand upon Mount Zion are spoken of as *learners* of the song. It has been suggested that the harpers with whom the song originates are the martyrs under the beast. This may well be, and we can easily conceive of them as having been received, after their martyrdom, into heaven and as having there learned the song that they teach those who have survived the tribulation. These sufferers, whether at the cost of patient endurance or of life, constitute a class by themselves in intimate relation to Christ when He takes possession of Zion. That the second company in the seventh chapter does not sing this song, though they come out of the great tribulation, is of no special import unless it be in testimony of the fact that the persecution under the beast is limited in location as well as in duration. During this time of trouble the judgments of God are *general,* affecting

all classes. The persecutions of the beast are *specific,* affecting only those who refuse to worship him. These receive special recognition. Whether enduring the persecution, or dying under it, they are alike awarded.

"These are they that were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb wherever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no falsehood, for they are without blame."

The Father's name written upon their foreheads marks them out as having refused the mark of the beast or the number of his name. During the time characterized by the general denial of the Father they remain in virgin faithfulness to Christ, and follow Him until He takes possession of His royal seat, and then they also take possession with Him.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having the everlasting gospel to announce to those dwelling upon the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and the sea and the fountains of waters. And another angel followed, a second, saying, Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen, which hath made all nations to drink of the wine of the fury of her fornication. And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any one worshipeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark upon his forehead or upon his hand, he shall even drink of the wine of the fury of God, which is mixed, unadulterated, in the cup of his wrath; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up to the ages of ages, and they have no rest day and night who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints —those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice out of heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in [the] Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them. And I saw, and behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sitting like a Son of man, having upon his head a golden crown, and in his hand [the] sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat upon the cloud, Put forth thy sickle and reap; for the hour is come to reap, because the harvest of the earth is dried. And he that sat upon the cloud thrust his sickle upon the earth, and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, having himself also a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, having authority over fire; and he spake with a loud voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Put forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust his sickle to the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it

into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came blood out of the winepress unto the bits of the horses for a thousand six hundred furlongs.—(Chapter 14:6-20.)

THE rift in the cloud, through which Mount Zion is seen with the Lamb standing upon it, is only momentary. It assures our hearts, however, that Zion shall yet be lifted above the hills and the true David enthroned there. The vision is anticipatory, as is that of the second company in the seventh chapter, and we are permitted to see the end before it is reached. Our examination of the Psalms in which Zion's future is predicted has shown us how this is quite in accord with God's manner. He keeps constantly before us the end in view, and then shows the successive steps that lead up to it. The Lamb is established upon Mount Zion at the end of the tribulation period, and our attention is called to some further details that give character to these final days. The vision is followed by the appearing of an "angel flying in mid-heaven, having the everlasting gospel to announce to those dwelling upon the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and the sea and the fountains of waters." Two other angels follow. One proclaims the fall of Babylon, and the other denounces the worshipers of the beast. These three proclamations constitute the subject-matter of "the everlasting gospel." After this there comes a voice from heaven, declaring the blessedness of the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth. Then come the harvest and the vintage.

In the first place, what are we to understand by the words, "the everlasting gospel"? It is natural, perhaps, for us to think of this, as *the* gospel now proclaimed by evangelical preachers. This thought seems to be confirmed by the word, *everlasting,* which might be understood to indicate that this

has been the gospel from the beginning. If this everlasting gospel reaches back to the garden of Eden, where God proclaimed man's deliverance from the bondage into which he had come, then plainly it refers to the evangel that has been sounding down through the centuries. We must not, however, forget that the Old Testament gospel, with its promise of deliverance for man and restoration for the earth, is not necessarily identical with the gospel proclaimed after the resurrection of Christ. The original announcement was, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. That, plainly, is a gospel of *judgment,* such as is here proclaimed by the angel flying in mid-heaven. Salvation by faith through Christ, with a corresponding heavenly inheritance, is not found in this proclamation of the angel, nor is it, except in veiled speech, found anywhere in the Old Testament. The good news proclaimed by the prophets had reference to the coming of Messiah, and the establishment of His kingdom. It was a gospel of the *kingdom.* John the Baptist was a preacher of that gospel. His brief but solemn cry in the wilderness was: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He himself was, in answer to prophecy, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (LUKE 3:4). When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism, he said unto them: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner;

but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (MATT. 3:7-12).

This gospel proclaimed by John was a call to national repentance in view of the fact that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. In other words, the long-predicted Messiah was standing at the door. It was written of Him that He would purge "the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning" (Is. 4:4). In this character He is announced by John, who answers to Malachi's prophecy: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (MAL. 3:1-3).

Immediate judgment in order to the inauguration of the Messianic kingdom was the gospel that John proclaimed. The King had come, and He would thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner, but burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. Such a message has been the burden of all past prophecies and could justly be termed *the everlasting gospel.*

Both John and Jesus were put to death by the nation to whom this gospel was proclaimed. The kingdom, instead of being set up visibly before men, took altogether another form than that predicted by the prophets. Heaven received Him whom the world had cast out, and Jehovah said unto Him: "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Ps. 110:1).

The gospel entrusted to Paul is a very different one from that proclaimed by John the Baptist. Paul's commission was

of far wider import. On the road to Damascus Jesus said unto him: "Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (ACTS 26: 16-18).

This commission drives Paul beyond the boundaries of Judaism, and enjoins upon him the proclamation of a *world-wide* gospel. We have long since seen that Israel's history as the elect people of God was suspended when Christ was refused, and during the time of that suspension there comes in this world-wide proclamation of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. This is not the theme of the Old Testament preachers. This is not the announcement of *the King standing at the door;* it is not the declaration of impending judgments to purge the earth and prepare it for the establishing of the Messianic kingdom; it is not confined to the Jewish people; it is a message for all men, in all conditions and in every clime; and it gives assurance of salvation by grace; and joint-heirship with Christ to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. This is the gospel proclaimed by Paul, and by the multitude of evangelical preachers since his day. This is *not* "the everlasting gospel," which John the Baptist preached, and which shall be preached again when the Church has been taken up out of the world, and Israel's history once more resumed. The angel, flying in mid-heaven, proclaims, not Paul's gospel of grace; but, the everlasting gospel. It is one of judgment, and not of salvation through Christ. These two gospels have been confused by all that have failed to see the distinction in dispensations that the Scriptures nevertheless keep distinct. This judgment-gospel is referred to in our Lord's great prophecy in which He says: "This gospel *of the*

kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (MATT. 24:14).

We are at the time of the *end,* and this everlasting gospel of the kingdom is once more taken up and proclaimed as John the Baptist proclaimed it; and every nation and tribe and tongue and people shall be given the solemn warning: "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment is come." "Fear not," said the angel to the shepherds, "for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy." Here the word is: "Fear not." But the other is: "Fear God." This "Fear God," nevertheless, is a *gospel* for that time of unequaled darkness that shall precede the coming of the Lord in judgment. Serious tidings it may be to some, that the hour of God's judgment is come, and yet it is good tidings; because only through such judgments can the deliverance of the earth be effected. This proclamation of God's word shall not return to Him void, but shall accomplish that whereunto He sends it. Into the sea the drag net shall sink and gather of every kind. When that net is full, they will draw it to the shore, and shall gather the good into vessels, but shall cast the bad away.

"So shall it be at the end of the age: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (MATT. 13:49-50).

Jesus saith unto them: "Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord."

Alas, how little after all did they understand! And have we apprehended much more? No, despite the fact that we have been in possession of the long record of past ages during which the things which happened unto Israel happened unto them as types, and were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. (1 COR. 10:11). Though inheriting the accumulated wisdom of these centuries, we are slow of heart to believe; and the end of the way is wrapped in silent mystery. Divine judgment, ushering in the

Millennial reign of peace, is the burden of the Old Testament gospel, and this, when evil is found in full and final manifestation against God, is to be proclaimed again.

"Listen," says Grant, "to that same gospel as a preacher of old declared it. With what rapture of exultation does he break out as he cries, 'O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord all the earth; sing unto the Lord, bless His name, show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples. . . . Tremble before Him all the earth. Say among the nations that the Lord reigneth, the world also is established that it cannot be moved. He shall judge the peoples with equity. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar and the fulness thereof; let the field exult, and all that is therein. Then shall all the trees of the woods sing for joy before the Lord; for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth' (Ps. 96). Here is a gospel before Christianity, and which has been sounding out all through Christianity, whether men have heard it or not. This, too, is the echo of what we hear in Eden before the gate of the first paradise shuts upon the fallen and guilty pair, that the Seed of the woman should crush the serpent's head. That is a gospel which has been ringing through the ages since, which may well be called the everlasting one. Its form is only altered by the fact that now at last its promise is to be fulfilled. 'Judgment' is to 'return to righteousness.' The rod is iron, but henceforth in the Shepherd's hand. Man's day is passed; the day of the Lord is come, and every blow inflicted shall be on the head of evil, the smiting down of sorrow and of all that brings it. What can he be but rebel-hearted who shall refuse to join the anthem when the King-Creator comes unto His own again? The angel-evangel is thus a claim for worship from all people, and to Him that cometh every knee shall bow."

The second angel follows with the announcement that Baby-

lon is fallen. Babylon has been before us in the figure of the burning mountain cast into the sea. She is now looming up in larger proportions to fill the prophetic place assigned to her. Details of the terrific judgments by which she shall be finally overwhelmed are given us in the eighteenth chapter, where the subject will come up for full consideration. The dark shadow of Babylon, which rested so heavily on the Jewish monarchy in the closing years of the Old Testament history, once more rises round them in these last days with its menacing power. The great enemy of Israel in the past is to be the great enemy of Israel in the future, and once again Israel shall lie prostrate beneath this power, until, by the delivering judgments of God, she shall be made free forever, and Babylon shall sink to rise no more. Only the announcement of the fact is here given. When retributive justice shall finally overtake Babylon, her fall shall be commensurate with the terms of prophecy that predict it. Our examination of this must be deferred for the present.

The third angel follows, and his being spoken of as the third one would seem to indicate that he belongs to the company to which is given the commission to proclaim the everlasting gospel. This angel's denunciation of woe against those who are worshipers of the beast is quite in accordance with the subject-matter proclaimed by the others. It follows immediately after the proclamation of the fall of Babylon, and this is in harmony with the plea found in the eighteenth chapter, where, before the city goes down, a voice from heaven is heard saying, "Come out of her, my people, that ye partake not of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

Identification with the beast means the perishing with him when the final metropolis of his empire is overthrown. "If any one worshipeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark upon his forehead or upon his hand, he shall even drink of the wine of the fury of God, which is mixed, unadulterated, in the cup of his wrath; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the pres-

ence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up to the ages of ages, and they have no rest day and night who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

Thus heavily tolls the bell before Babylon falls. The partakers of her sins are warned of the doom that awaits them. Babylon hath filled her cup. Nothing but inveterate perversity and unabsolved iniquity could account for the solemn emphasis of the announcement of the unending plagues that are to be inflicted upon her. The call to come forth from all participation in her sins shall indeed be good tidings to those who hear it, and they, by obedience to the call, shall escape her doom.

Thus the word *gospel* is true to its significance, and, although here it is but a proclamation of *judgment,* it is nevertheless *good news* to the oppressed of the beast, who can see no way of escape except through the delivering judgments of One stronger than he. This earth-gospel is followed by another proclamation, which seems especially designed for those who shall give heed to the warning voice of the third angel. The death warrant has been written against them that refuse to worship the image of the beast. Death has for them no alternative but doom. To such as choose death there is given a special word of encouragement and comfort. A voice from heaven is heard saying: "Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."

In this expression there is no difficulty provided we keep before us the time to which it applies. The limiting clause here is found in the words *from henceforth;* and yet these are the very words that give force to its meaning. It should scarcely be necessary to tell us, with other Scripture in our hands, that they who *die in the Lord are blessed.* Of this fact we are everywhere given assurance. Even Balaam, apostate though he may have been, could still say: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

(NUM. 23:10). To die in the Lord, according to the New Testament, is "to fall asleep in Jesus," and rest in undisturbed repose until awakened at His coming. This is the portion of *all* those who "die in the Lord." But, as we have seen, the resurrection of "the dead in Christ" has taken place before this blessing in Revelation is announced. During the great tribulation they that are loyal to God have no prospect before them but martyrdom under the beast. For all such there is need of some especial assurance of blessing. This assurance is given to them by the voice that speaks from heaven while the gospel call is sounding: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." All opposing powers are about to fall, and the long-predicted kingdom is to be set up. Dying, therefore, within immediate prospect of the establishment of the kingdom, might seem to be irreparable loss. When the persecution of the beast begins, the voice from heaven declares: "Blessed are the dead who die in [the] Lord from *henceforth.* Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them." The word "henceforth" finds its own justification in this interpretation.

In the twentieth chapter the apostle says: "I saw the souls of those that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and such as had not worshiped the beast nor his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." They are here seen in possession of the blessing proclaimed by the voice from heaven. Though they died, they now live again, and reign with Christ. Resurrection is the reward of their martyrdom, and in this they are distinguished from the rest of the dead, who live not again until the thousand years are finished. Their resurrection from the dead is also declared to be the *first* resurrection. This statement will need to be examined more fully when it comes before us in its proper place.

We may be sure that this blessed proclamation will fall

with full significance upon the ears of those who, in the midst of the unparalleled afflictions of those days, shall remain true to their convictions of right, and shall resist all influence put forth to induce them to worship the beast, or to receive the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand.

The chapter closes with a vision of the harvest and the vintage. A clear distinction between these must be maintained if we are to understand what is here before us.

The harvest seems to be identical with the one spoken of in the thirteenth of Matthew. The wheat-field mingled with tares is plainly enough a parable of the present Christian dispensation. Respecting the tares the question is: "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (MATT. 13:28-30).

Interpreting this parable Jesus says: "The harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this age. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (MATT. 13:39-43).

The question still remains, Are we to regard *this* harvest as identical with the one in Revelation? This, when considered carefully, would seem to be the fact, and yet there appears to be a very serious obstacle in the way of such a theory. If the present dispensation is represented by the field of wheat and tares, then it is evident that when the Lord appears, the wheat is all gathered, and nothing but a field of tares remains. But this harvest is seven years before our Lord's coming to

establish the kingdom. This brief intervening period, and in the whole extent of it, is certainly the *end* of the Jewish age. At the beginning of this period the wheat is to be gathered into the barn, and the tares to be bound in bundles for burning. The gathering of the wheat, which represents the removal of the Church to heaven, leaves on earth those who have made a mere profession of Christianity and who are represented by the five foolish virgins. (MATT. 25: 1-13). The professing church remains during the seven years in which the prophecies of the Messianic kingdom are brought to an issue. It is to be noted, however, that after the removal of the true Church, we are given assurance that an elect company of all Israel, and also a great multitude from all nations, shall pass victoriously through the great tribulation and be found in fellowship with Christ at the time of His inauguration. Therefore the field to be harvested at the *end* of the period shall in like manner be one of wheat mingled with tares. The sessional judgment recorded in Matthew (24: 31-46) is positively at the *end* of the seven years, and in immediate connection with the establishment of the kingdom. By this time, then, both the harvest and the vintage shall be over. As a matter of fact, the time of the harvest, as well as the time of the vintage, would seem to be coextensive with these final seven years. At the beginning of them, as we have seen, the Son of man sends "his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (MATT. 24:31). This evidently refers to the gathering and sealing of the one hundred and forty-four thousand of chapter seven, after which the great tribulation begins. The *whole* period being the time of harvest, we may regard the removal of the Church as the *barley* harvest, while that which remains to be gathered in at the end of the seven years may be regarded as the *wheat* harvest.

The parable of the sheep and the goats, which is one of discriminative judgment at the end of the seven years, is at any

rate a harvest where our Lord gathers before Him all nations, and passes judgment according to their treatment of His *brethren.* It is therefore, apparently, a judgment of the *Gentiles.* Such is certainly a harvest of the earth, and may be the harvest referred to in our passage in Revelation.

In the vision of the *vintage* we have before us what is characteristic of Israel rather than of the Gentiles.

"Another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, having himself also a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, having authority over fire; and he spake with a loud voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Put forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe." In this action the vine of the earth is gathered, and cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God. The vine of the earth is a symbol constantly employed in reference to Israel. We have before considered this in our examination of the eightieth Psalm and other kindred passages. By virtue of the use of this symbol in a different application, we cannot confine its meaning altogether to Israel, and yet in the passage before us it would seem that Israel alone is intended. It is the time, as we have shown repeatedly, of Jacob's *sorrow;* and no other symbol could more fittingly represent and characterize that period.

The vine of the earth gathered and cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God—this is the language used by the Spirit to define the character of the sufferings through which Israel must yet pass in order to be perfected. The blood, issuing from the winepress, and rising to the bits of the horses for a space of a thousand six hundred furlongs, gives, as perhaps no other expression so accurately could, a picture of the misery following the terrific judgments that are yet to overwhelm the world. The suggestion, that a thousand six hundred furlongs measure the length of Palestine, is of value, if it can be shown that such be the exact length of the Holy Land. A fact such as this would be another indication that

the judgment here spoken of was one visited more especially upon Israel. The winepress is also suggestive of the vision found in the sixty-third of Isaiah, where the conqueror comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah. The blood that stains his raiment is the blood of his enemies. In Revelation the winepress speaks of Israel's sorrows.

Referring to the very time under consideration, the prophet Joel brings before us both the harvest and the vintage. "For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land" (JOEL 3:1-2. R. V.)

Here the valley of Jehoshaphat is plainly indicated as the scene of the sessional judgment spoken of in the twenty-fifth of Matthew. In reference to the harvest and the vintage he says: "Proclaim ye this among the nations; prepare war: stir up the mighty men; let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Haste ye, and come, all ye nations round about, and gather yourselves together: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, tread ye; for the winepress is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. And the Lord shall roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be a refuge unto his people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain: then shall

Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more" (JOEL 3:9-17. R. V.).

Here the Gentiles and Israel are alike under consideration; the Gentiles answering to the reaping by the sickle, and Israel answering to the vintage of the winepress.

Joel goes beyond the harvest and the vintage and lets the eye rest upon the reign of peace and blessing that shall succeed. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall flow with waters; and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall abide forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. And I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion" (JOEL 3: 18-21. R. V.).

The howling winds of the tempest are heard no more. The muttering thunders die away. The morning breaks without a cloud. The endless day has come and peace reigns over a world redeemed.

XXVII

THE SEA OF GLASS

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels having seven plagues, the last, for in them is completed the indignation of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass, mingled with fire; and those that had gained the victory over the beast and over his image and over the number of his name, standing upon the sea of glass, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and wonderful are thy works, Lord God Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, O King of Ages. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee, because thy righteous acts have been made manifest. And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of witness was opened in heaven: and there came out of the temple the seven angels who had the seven plagues, clothed with pure bright linen, and girt about the breasts with golden girdles. And one of the four living beings gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls, full of the indignation of God, who liveth to the ages of ages. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.—(Chapter 15.)

ONCE more the clouds are parted and for the *last* time before the final judgment falls. The sign, which John declares to be "great and wonderful," is a vision of "seven angels having seven plagues." These are the last, for in them is completed the indignation of God. The nature and effect of the plagues will come before us when, in the following chapter, we consider their infliction.

The pouring out of these vials of wrath brings to a full end the mystery of the divine patience and government. These judgments are absolutely final and bring to an end the present order of things. The scepter, so long apparently out of the

hand of Christ, is now to be taken by Him permanently, and the kingdom for which the world has long waited is at last to be established in perfect righteousness.

During the long ages of man's misrule, God, though silent, has been sovereign over all. Evil has not been without restraint, and eternal counsels have remained unchanged. When Moses received his commission to deliver Israel, he said to God: "They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee. And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee" (Ex. 4: 1-5).

The rod, symbol of the rod of power in Christ's hand, was not *wrenched* from the hand of Moses. He cast it to the ground and it remained a serpent only while out of his hand. The power of Christ abides with Him. The rod, temporarily out of His hand, has taken the form of a serpent, but the power of Satan can be exercised only as long as Christ wills. When He shall stretch forth His hand and take the scepter, which for the time being has been voluntarily surrendered by Him, then the rule of the serpent shall be over, and Christ's everlasting kingdom established. The brief rebellion that follows the Millennial reign is permitted for the all-sufficient reason, that man must learn fully and finally the lesson of his own utter helplessness in the presence of unrestrained evil. The retributive justice which overtakes these offenders in their last revolt is so swift and overwhelming, that we may justly regard the pouring out of the seven vials of indignation as constituting a part of the final judgment. It is at least final in this, that it brings to a full end the Jewish age and intro-

duces the Millennium. The vials are conclusive judgments, and so terrific are they, that the theme of the song that introduces them is regarded by the apostle as "great and wonderful."

They are not permitted to smite the earth until, after the usual manner, we are given a glimpse of what lies beyond the storm when its force is spent.

The sea of glass "mingled with fire" is not the same as in the fourth chapter. The words "*mingled with fire*" are the differentiating terms. The sea, in both places, naturally suggests that sea of water in the temple, which was used for purposes of purification. A sea of glass, or a sea of crystal, is the figure of stability. The company of the fourth chapter and the one shown here have reached a place beyond all changes. They are redeemed, and there is no longer any need of purification for them. They have escaped altogether the pollution of the world, and are *fixed* in their eternal relationship with God. The second company is not, of course, identical with the first. It has reached the place of fixed purity, but the sea of glass that testifies to this is here seen "mingled with fire."

According to the apostle Peter, fire is a symbol of the various trials permitted of God for the proving of faith. In the days immediately prior to the execution of the beast there will be given unusual opportunity for faith to make itself manifest, and this, in the end, shall have full recognition by, and be owned of, God. The saints of that time shall be put to grief by various trials, that the proving of their faith, "being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 PET. 1:7).

The sea, therefore, on which these victors stand is "mingled with fire," and this speaks of the trials by which their faith is perfected, and their purification accomplished. This company on the sea of glass is kept distinct from all others in Revelation, and is composed of such as have gained the vic-

tory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name.

If the company of the fourteenth chapter be, as has been suggested, composed of those who survive the persecutions of the beast, then this company should consist of those who have gained the victory by martyrdom. They are spoken of as having "harps of God," and this is in keeping also with what we have in the fourteenth chapter. There the harpers sing "a new song before the throne," which the survivors of the persecution learn from them.

The harp—though of much earlier use—did not give forth its full-toned melody until it came into the hands of David. The harp is a symbol of nature, inanimate and silent, until glorious harmonies are evoked from it by the touch of man. The harp-strings swept by the fingers of David produced the delivering music for Saul. The glorious harmonies acted directly upon Saul rather than upon Satan. "It came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" (1 SAM. 16:23).

In the days to come nature shall respond to the touch of One greater than David. The framework of creation shall constitute a mighty harp producing a melody that shall exert a sweeter charm than David's upon the souls of men. From Israel the evil spirit shall depart, and the delivering music shall roll through the universe and become at last the eternal anthem of all the redeemed.

These harpers of Revelation are the *Sauls* that have been set free by the music of David's harp, and through suffering have acquired the ability to sound the depths of nature and make it vocal with their own touch. They sing upon a sea of glass "The song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." These songs, though brought in perfect harmony here, are two, not one. The song of Moses is found in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus, and was sung on the day

when the Lord saved Israel out of the land of their bondage. It proclaims the glorious triumph of Jehovah in the overthrow in the sea of Israel's enemy. How exultingly they sing: "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble" (Ex. 15: 6-7). The full significance of this song shall appear when the singers upon the crystal sea sing it with the accompaniment of the harps of God.

The plagues about to be inflicted are suggestive of those in Egypt that brought about deliverance for Israel. That redemption was a type of the full salvation set forth in Revelation. It is, however, a *double* type, having significance for us as well as for Israel.

It is for us, because "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7). Sheltered by the blood of Christ, we escape the judgment that shall overtake the world. The story of Israel's redemption from Egypt is the typical story of our own, and the song of that deliverance is therefore the song of the Lamb.

In the coming day this same blessed song shall have its full meaning for Israel too. While their enemies are held in check, they shall sing as of old: "By the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (Ex. 15: 16-18).

The text of the song is now given us: "Great and wonderful are thy works, Lord God Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, O King of Ages. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all

nations shall come and worship before thee, because thy righteous acts have been made manifest." After full redemption has been accomplished, the voices of *all* the redeemed shall unite in the testimony, that He who alone has title to be the King of Ages has acted in ways that are righteous and true. In the mystery of the past, and in that of this present dispensation, this may be disputed; but when the darkness that has covered the earth is banished, and the works of the Almighty are made manifest, then also shall the ways of the King of Ages be fully vindicated.

The theme of the everlasting gospel was: "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment is come." Now, when the storm of judgment is over, the song of the redeemed is: "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" The summons to fear God and glorify Him is fully justified by the fact that He only is holy. Patiently, but thoroughly, He has wrought through all the ages, and though His judgments have been unsearchable, and His ways past finding out, yet in the end He is found to be holy, and to have always acted according to the requirements of His own nature.

All the nations shall come and worship before Him, because His righteous acts have been made manifest. Here again we are brought to the beginning of the Millennial reign of peace. The words of the song itself seem to be borrowed from the eighty-sixth Psalm. "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: Thou art God alone" (Ps. 86: 9-10).

This Psalm is a prophecy, and the song in Revelation is the fulfillment of it. The end to which it looks may seem to us far away still, and yet all prophetic Scriptures unite in their testimony that these words shall become literally true. Nay, more, these very prophecies are confirmed by the oath of Jehovah. "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto

me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear" (Is. 45:23).

The lifting of David's throne from its ruins means blessing for the whole earth. Indeed for this the world waits, and without this the blessing cannot be. Israel's blessing is not without its effect upon the surrounding nations. It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, "that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory" (Is. 66: 18). For this day we wait, and its sure dawning is predicted by all the voices of the prophets. Christ is indeed the King of Ages, and apart from Him all ages are without significance.

Before the final vials of wrath are poured out, the temple of the tabernacle of testimony is opened in heaven. It is, literally, the sanctuary of the temple, the very dwelling place of God Himself. Out of His presence come, as if especially commissioned by Himself, the seven angels who have the seven plagues. They are "clothed with pure bright linen, and girt about the breasts with golden girdles." These are priestly garments, and are the same as those in which the Son of man is arrayed as He stands in judgment in the midst of the lampstands. (Chapter 1:13). The golden girdles may speak of His heart's affection held in restraint by the divine righteousness. The vials of wrath are necessary. Divine holiness requires that they shall be poured out. The end in view is full and final deliverance. Thus the heart of God is bound, while His "strange work" of judgment goes on. But only through such judgments can the world be purged of iniquity, and made the seat of the throne of the King of Ages.

Here, as in other places, the cherubim are seen in connection with the execution of judgment. "One of the four living beings gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls, full of the indignation of God, who liveth to the ages of ages." The administration of divine government is one and the same throughout its whole extent. The cherubim that keep the estate in which they were created abide in glory,

and in the continual exercise of those functions originally bestowed upon them.

The delivering of the bowls into the hands of the seven angels is followed by a volume of smoke that fills the sanctuary. Once more clouds and darkness are round about God. We are carried back into the Old Testament conception. The reserve, so characteristic of the old dispensation, is again manifest. Judgment implies sin and, therefore, distance from God. The clouds are about Him until judgment is past. No one is able to enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels are completed.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall *see* God." From all others, clouds and darkness shall for ever hide Him. These last judgments are to issue in the full cleansing of the earth, and this shall reach to the very fountain of all iniquity, —the human heart. With the human heart made pure, the clouds that shut God in shall vanish away, and then the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God.

XXVIII

THE SEVEN GOLDEN BOWLS

And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go and pour out the seven bowls of the indignation of God upon the earth. And the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and there came an evil and grievous sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. And the second poured out his bowl upon the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man, and every living soul died, [even] things that are in the sea. And the third poured out his bowl upon the rivers and springs of waters, and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Thou art righteous, who art and who wast, the holy one, because thou hast judged thus; for they have shed the blood of saints and of prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; they are worthy. And I heard the altar saying, Yea, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire; and men were scorched with great scorching, and blasphemed the name of God, who had authority over these plagues; and repented not to give him glory. And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores; and repented not of their works. And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way of the kings from the sun-rising might be prepared. And I saw out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, doing signs, which go forth unto the kings of the whole habitable earth to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God Almighty. (Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame). And he gathered them together unto the place called in the Hebrew tongue, Har-Magedon. And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came out a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as

had not been since men were upon the earth, such an earthquake, so great. And the great city was divided into three parts; and the cities of the nations fell; and Babylon the great came into remembrance before God to give her the cup of the wine of the indignation of his wrath. And every island fled, and the mountains were not found; and a great hail, as of a talent weight, cometh down out of heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of hail, because the plague of it is exceeding great.—(Chapter 16.)

THE temple, as we have seen, has been filled with smoke, and all access denied until the seven vials of wrath should be poured out. Clouds and darkness are round about God while this last judgment is executed. The voice out of the temple is, therefore, the voice of God. Divine wisdom governs all. The judgments of the vials are both deliberate and conclusive. They are not coextensive with the trumpets, though the first four of them fall where the first four trumpet-judgments fell, and in the same order. The vials are in immediate connection with the end, and are of specific restriction. They appear to be *cumulative,* and they terminate only when the whole realm of Satan is shaken.

The first vial is poured out upon the earth, and the result is the outbreak of "an evil and grievous sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image." These successive judgments seem to be in immediate relation to the beast and his followers, who meet their doom on the battlefield of Har-Magedon. An "evil and grievous sore" is the sure symbol of the outbreak of some inner corruption. By this judgment the moral condition of the heart is brought to the surface and fully exposed. It will show, and it appears to be executed for the purpose of showing, that in those days there shall be no longer any restraint upon the corruptions of the human heart; and external proof shall not be wanting to demonstrate what man is morally. Jesus, in His denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees, said: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited

sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (MATT. 23:27-28). At the end of the age no such external covering shall be permitted. Worshipers of the beast shall be compelled to exhibit themselves in the full reality of what they are morally, and in the sight of all men.

The plagues themselves are suggestive of those sent upon Egypt at the time of Israel's deliverance. That deliverance was without doubt typical of the one accomplished here. The plagues, as in Egypt, are to be inflicted not only for the deliverance of Israel, but for a testimony also of God's judgment upon Israel's enemies. The apostle Paul has, in the epistle to the Romans, shown us what man is naturally. The moral condition therein revealed is now found commonly enough wherever in the world the restraining power of the Holy Spirit does not check the natural tendencies of the human heart. This natural condition of man shall manifest itself, not secretly as is often the case now, but outwardly and generally when, in the last days, the worshipers of the beast shall make manifest their *bestial* nature. Moral character is not attributable to beasts. They may be unmoral, but they are not immoral. Man *acting like a beast* is both immoral and responsible. The beast worshipers upon whom the first vial is poured out are plainly of such character. They shall manifest themselves as being what they are by giving free rein to the lusts that possess them. The furious outburst of human passion that flamed forth in the French Revolution has been regarded by some of the historical interpreters as the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Elliott regards the first six vials as covering the entire era of the French Revolution. These vials, however, are connected so obviously with the Second Coming of our Lord, that there is no possibility of their having been fulfilled by the events of the French Revolution. Their fulfillment lies in the

future and in immediate relation to the Second Coming of Christ. The French Revolution may nevertheless represent what shall yet take place, when all social and moral evil shall be no longer restrained, and atheism and vice shall together run riot. Such awful scenes as were enacted in Paris, when God was given up and the lusts of men deified, shall again be manifested, and more widely too in these last days when the worship of God shall be exchanged for the worship of the beast.

The second vial is poured upon the sea, which becomes "as the blood of a dead man." Elliott considers this as prophetic of the great *naval war,* following the French Revolution till the fall of Napoleon, in which "were destroyed," he says, "nearly two hundred ships of the line, between three and four hundred frigates, and an almost incalculable number of vessels of war and ships of commerce." He also quotes Dr. Keith as saying, "that the whole history of the world does not represent such a period of naval war, destruction, and bloodshed." These things, however, cannot be more than the historical illustration of the effect produced upon the nations by the pouring out of this second vial of wrath. The language conveys the thought of a more awful calamity than that produced by "great naval disasters and the destruction of war vessels and ships of commerce." The sea itself here becomes as the blood of a *dead man.*

Grant says: "It cannot be that it is merely *dead blood,* for all blood shed becomes that almost at once, and the sea turned into blood would by itself suggest death without the addition." He further remarks that the blood of a dead man may speak of one that has lost his life, not violently, nor by his blood being *shed,* but either through disease or natural decay. Such a death, according to the law of Moses, testified to some consuming disease, and consequently the body of a beast *dying of itself* could not be used for food. Grant adds: "If this thought be the true one, then the state imaged under the second bowl is not that of strife and bloodshed among the

nations, but of all spiritual life gone, which the addition, 'every living soul died in the sea,' affirms as complete. Life there might be in hunted and outlawed men, no longer recognized as part of the nations; but the mass was dead. This seems to give consistently the full force of the expression."

We must remember that the time to which this part of Revelation brings us is altogether exceptional in history. We are in the field of pure prophecy, and it is utterly impossible to give the full details without specific declarations of Scripture to sustain what is affirmed. We are in the midst of the closing scenes of that time of trouble such as has never been since the world began or ever shall be again. The moral condition existing under the first vial is followed by another, in which men, though living, are nevertheless destitute of anything which in the sight of God could be regarded as really constituting life; *living,* no longer as men, but on the level of a beast. The blood sustaining such a life is but "the blood of a dead man."

The rivers and fountains of waters are affected by the third vial. This judgment is even more appalling than the third trumpet. The springs and fountains under the trumpet-judgment were embittered, but here they become *as blood.* The rivers and springs of water speak almost uniformly of spiritual life and refreshing. We can easily conceive of the corrupting of the waters under the third trumpet, but the figure here implies a more radical thing. The fountains of spiritual life have been changed into fountains of death. They pour forth *blood,* not water. Those who have shed the blood of saints and prophets are, under the judgment of God, compelled to drink this blood.

The preaching of the apostle Paul was unto God "a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." "To the one," he says, "we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life" (2 COR. 2: 15-16).

At the time of the pouring out of the third vial, the varied sources of spiritual life shall become universally the savor

of death unto death. The angel of the waters—whoever he may represent—vindicates God in His sending upon men such an appalling judgment. "Thou are righteous, who art and who wast, the holy one, because thou hast judged thus; for they have shed the blood of saints and of prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; they are worthy." To this declaration of the angel there is given a response from the altar: "Yea, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

The fourth vial is poured out upon the sun, and men are scorched with the terrific heat. Instead of repenting, they blaspheme God, and refuse to give Him glory. The sun here, as elsewhere, is the symbol of supreme authority: in this case that of political authority in the last days.

Wordsworth sees in this the temporal splendor of the papacy, which scorches its subjects by the galling exactions through which it is maintained.

Napoleon is regarded by the historical school as answering to what is here represented. His career can only be historically illustrative of what shall take place in those final days, when the imperial power of the world shall blaze forth in such an absolute and self-willed despotism, that the only symbol adequately representing it is that of the sun scorching men with the intensity of its heat. That the sun here represents that head of political despotism that is so prominent in prophetic Scriptures can scarcely be questioned. These vial-judgments are so manifestly in connection with the beast and his followers, that it is not difficult to conceive of the sun representing no less a person than the beast himself. The judgment is not directly on him; it falls especially upon his *worshipers*—and this may speak of the sufferings endured by those who are under his iron despotism. This power is only delegated to him, and he is therefore used as the instrument of God in the infliction of the judgment. Even under the misery of such a galling government as the world has never before witnessed, men will neither repent of their sins nor turn to God for

help. Instead of being bowed in repentance before God, they blaspheme His name, and thus effectually close the only door through which relief can come. Truly it is a blessed thing to be given assurance that such a period of unrestrained lawlessness is to be permitted only for a brief season. Judgments, instead of softening, only harden the heart against God.

The fifth vial is poured out upon the throne of the beast, and this is followed by the darkening of his kingdom. It will be remembered that the characteristic thing about the church in Pergamos was, that she was found dwelling "where Satan's *throne* is." The significance of this expression we have already considered. In the thirteenth chapter, where the beast is first referred to, the dragon gives him "his power and his throne and great authority." Therefore the thrones of the dragon and of the beast are identical. Satan's power is exercised by the instruments employed by him. Expelled from heaven, he acts indirectly through the beast and the false prophet. The throne of the beast is to be established in the place of his royal residence, and this is to be literal Babylon. In fact everything now points directly toward Babylon as the storm center of all final judgments. The darkening of the kingdom, which follows the pouring out of the fifth vial, is *not* brought about by the withdrawal of the light of God. That had been withdrawn long before. The darkening can scarcely be understood as *spiritual,* because the moral condition of man had long ere this evoked the judgment: "Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not" (Ps. 69: 23). The darkness that covers the kingdom is in reality the vanishing away of the light by which the subjects of the beast have been allured. If Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, as Scripture assures us, then he will exhibit devilish cunning in so clothing this political head of world-empire with supernatural brightness that he shall entice men to their destruction.

The language of the eighteenth chapter testifies to the magnificence and grandeur of Babylon. Invested with a pa-

geantry transcending the splendor of ancient Babylon, or of any other monarchy past or present, this imperial ruler shall be deified and worshiped. The preternatural glow of his kingdom is from the blaze of the pit. When the vial of God's wrath is poured out upon the seat of the beast, and the light of his kingdom dims, then men who have trusted in that light, and now see in the vanishing of it the failure of all their hopes, shall gnaw their tongues for pain. Instead of repenting of the vile works of the flesh that have brought them into their present frightful condition, they blaspheme the God of heaven because of their torment. "The God of heaven" is an expression found too frequently in the book of Daniel to be without significance. To Nebuchadnezzar Daniel said: "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known to the king what shall be in the latter days."

When the fourth kingdom, which is the kingdom of the beast, has been fully established, the *God of heaven* sets up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. The God of heaven is now making Himself known, and, in the supreme glory of His presence, the weird light of the beast flickers, and goes out, and darkness spreads over his kingdom. It is the darkness fleeing before the light of the God of heaven. It is the darkness of the whirling simoon that shall envelop these rebels against the government of God. It is the prelude of that "outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." God does not withdraw His light, but pours the full power of it upon them, and thus reveals that they who would have none of Christ's counsel are wretched and miserable, "even poor and blind and naked." For such the fifth vial of wrath is foreordained.

The sixth vial is poured out upon the great river Euphrates, which is also the sphere of judgment following the sixth trumpet. Babylon on the Euphrates, at the initial point of restoration, is indicated by the burning mountain cast into the sea, after the sounding of the second trumpet. The complete restoration is accomplished by the demon-possessed body of

horsemen that appears upon the scene when the sixth trumpet is sounded. The sixth vial is poured out upon the Euphrates, and the way is opened for the "kings of the east," who are summoned to witness the overwhelming destruction of Babylon. Lying beyond the boundaries of the empire of the beast are other powers that are swept by the swirl of judgment into the field of prophetic history.

Concerning these nations the Scriptures are not silent. To the prophet Ezekiel Jehovah said: "Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him" (EZEK. 38:2, R. V.). This great prince, at the head of an immense army, and accompanied by tributary powers, is by the prophet seen assembled against the mountains of Israel, "Like a storm covering the earth, he and all his bands." This is not the place to speak of the incursion from the north to which the prophet especially refers. It is here sufficient to notice the fact, that beyond the boundaries of the empire of the beast there shall be found in the last days nations in opposition to Israel. It is also possible that these powerful nations of the north shall be used of God for executing judgment upon the beast before the Millennial kingdom of Christ is established. Magog represents the Scythians, from whom, after their mixture with the Medes, came the Russians. Therefore, "the Prince of Rosh" is none other than the Czar of Russia, while Meshech and Tubal are Moscow and Tobolsk, the pillar cities of that empire. We have only to look at a biblical map in order to locate geographically these nations found in banded conflict against Israel in the last days. Magog is in Russia, northwest of the Caspian Sea. Gomer is in Russia, north of the Black Sea. These and their allies are found within the geographical area of the present Russian empire. From this hotbed of unrest will spring the noxious growth that shall overspread the fields marked out by prophecy.

The pouring out of the sixth vial upon the Euphrates results in the drying up of the river, and thus prepares a way

for this incursion of the kings from the east. They come together on the battlefield of Har-Magedon for the last great conflict among the nations immediately preceding the coming of the Son of man. This conflict is spoken of as "The War of the Great Day of God Almighty."

The armies are brought together by demons of a most malignant type. The apostle says: "I saw out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, doing signs, which go forth unto the kings of the whole habitable earth to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God Almighty."

These spirits proceed from that awful trinity of evil: The Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet. This fact is sufficient witness to the intensity of their uncleanness.

Frogs, as Grant well says, "are creatures of slime and of the night—blatant, impudent impotents, cheap orators, who can yet gather men for serious work. Here, those brought together little know whom they go out to meet; but this is the common history of men revealed in its true character. The Cross has shown it to us on the one side; the conflict of the last days shows it on the other. The veil of the world is removed, and it is seen here what influences carry them: the 'dragon,' the spirit of a wisdom which, being 'earthly,' is 'sensual, devilish' (JAS. 3:15); the 'beast,' the influence of power, which apostate from God is bestial (Ps. 49:20); 'the false prophet,' the inspiration of hopes that are not of God: so the mass is led."

To Har-Magedon these forces are gathered together by demon-incitation. The word "Har-Magedon" is a Hebrew compound meaning "the mountain of Megiddo." Our attention is especially directed to the significance of this name in the *Hebrew*. It defined the great battlefield of Old Testament times. There the Canaanitish kings were overthrown, and in such an overwhelming way as to give origin to the great triumphal song recorded in the fifth of Judges. The Old Testa-

ment speaks rather of the *plain* of the waters of Megiddo, while here the word is "the *mountain* of Megiddo," and to this significant point our attention is called by the etymology. The root-meaning of Megiddo is given as "to hew down," and, according to this, the expression would signify "the mountain of those hewn down."

This same battlefield was the scene of the overthrow of Josiah by Pharaoh-Necho. On this same field Ahaziah died of the wounds received from Jehu. The *mountain of the slain* may well therefore be a term to designate the place where the last great overthrow is to take place, and where the enemies of Christ shall be "hewn down."

There is an interjected warning: "Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

The seventh vial is poured out "upon the air." Satan is "the prince of the power of the *air,*" and his realm is now to be shaken by the terrific judgments of God. This seventh vial is conclusive. The embattled host of Jehovah is moving silently around the walls of Jericho. A decisive voice from the throne is heard, saying: "It is done." The breath of the Lord smites the wicked one; the jubilee trumpets sound; the walls of the world's empire fall; and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ.

The discharge of the divine judgment in the air is followed by a terrific earthquake, and "the great city was divided into three parts." To what great city does this expression refer? Lange says: "We have more than once pointed out the decisive import of this passage. It contains the key to all that follows, as a summary declaration, namely, of the General Judgment and as a disposition of the three following special judgments (Babylon—the Beast—Gog and Magog). Hence it results also that the *great City,* as such, must comprehend all three parts, and consequently that it can denote neither Christian nor Pagan Rome, though Rome is its highest representative point. Still further from the truth is the reference

to Jerusalem (Bengel, Herder, Hofmann, *et al.*). Considered in and for itself, the great City is an ideal City, embracing all Antichristianity in the Occident and in the Orient. According to Hengstenberg (who remarks that two Cities in the Apocalypse bear the title of *great,* Jerusalem and Babylon, *i. e.,* Rome), not only are we to avoid thinking of Jerusalem in this connection, but we are also to put Christian Rome out of our thoughts—the City, he maintains, can be only a heathen City, heathen Rome. A certain tender care for 'Christian' Rome is hardly mistakable here. It is impossible, however, that eschatological Antichristianity should ripen in a heathen City, knowing nothing properly of Christianity."

Something more definite than this, surely, is before us.

The "great city" cannot be *Babylon,* which is immediately mentioned as *distinct* from it. In the following chapter we are plainly told: "The woman which thou sawest is *the great city* that hath sway over the kings of the earth." Surely we need look no further for an interpretation of what is meant by the great city. It is the *woman,* and she is none other than *papal Rome.* Rome, in her last analysis, is represented in the letter to Thyatira. Her catholicity, to which she has laid illegitimate claim, is not established until after the removal of the true Church to heaven. The proclamation of the "everlasting gospel" follows that removal, and it will awaken individuals left in the delusion of Romanism. The dividing of the city into three parts may answer to what is even now represented by Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

"The cities of the nations" that fall immediately after are doubtless the capital cities of those nations whose armies, under demonic energy, are brought to the great conflict on the battlefield of Har-Magedon. After the cities of the nations fall, Babylon the great comes into remembrance before God. This is literal Babylon: and the details of her judgment are written in the eighteenth chapter.

The three-fold effect following the pouring out of the seventh vial is here stated only in brief. They are the last three strokes which annihilate the combined enemies of Christ. These enemies are the apostate church, Mystery, Babylon; the nations, gathered together in final conflict with Christ and His armies; and literal Babylon, the royal city of the beast. In these three forms, "Foul sin, gathering head, shall break into corruption." They fall in succession, and immediately thereafter the kingdom of Christ is established. Islands and mountains are swept away in the piteous rain of hail that falls from heaven upon men. This storm, like all others that precede it, produces no repentance, no turning of the heart to God, but rather brings to the surface the desperate wickedness of the human heart, and men are still found blaspheming the God of heaven. Strange indeed that men should blaspheme God for the execution of judgment upon Satan, and upon the instruments employed by Satan for the destruction of the earth! They little realize that the earth's blessing can be brought in only by the destruction of the earth's enemies. In no other way can this be brought to pass. Of the final blessing we are sure. God, who has established a barrier for the restless sea, has fixed a limit for the nations beyond which they cannot go. From that barrier the last wave of rebellion shall be hurled back to return no more forever.

XXIX

THE REIGN OF THE SCARLET WOMAN

And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, and spoke with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon the many waters; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and those who dwell upon the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. And he carried me away in spirit into a wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication; and upon her forehead there was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great wonder. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, who hath the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast which thou sawest, was, and is not, and is about to rise out of the abyss and go into destruction: and those that dwell upon the earth, whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, shall wonder when they see the beast, because he was, and is not, and shall be present. Here is the mind that hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains whereupon the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh he must remain a little while. And the beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth to destruction. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet, but receive authority as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and give their power and authority to the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And

the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire; for God hath put into their hearts to do his mind, and to act with one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be completed. And the woman which thou sawest is the great city that hath sway over the kings of the earth.—(Chapter 17.)

THE woman of this chapter is, beyond all possibility of successful contradiction, an apostate ecclesiastical system. Whether she represents the papal church—as many contend—or the entire mass of professing Christendom after the true Church has been taken from the earth, is an open question. But that she stands for one or the other of these is absolutely certain. By no possibility can she be identified with the woman of the twelfth chapter; for that woman, as has been shown, represents Israel, the mother of Christ after the flesh, and can represent *no other*. The woman of this chapter, however false, is in bridal, not maternal, relation to Christ. Claiming to be *His bride* she has fallen from her pure condition and become a harlot. Such a condition shall assuredly be manifest in the apostate church just prior to the return of our Lord with the true Church. The indications are of such a character as to mark out more particularly the ecclesiastical system now known as the papal church. Romanism shall be in existence at the time, but more fearfully apostate than she has ever been. The definite marks here given are such as have in a general way characterized Romanism throughout the entire time of her history.

The woman rides a "scarlet beast." Unquestionably this beast is the first beast of Revelation, and his identity is plain throughout. Scarlet is the symbol of the glory of the world. It characterizes the only glory possessed by the beast. The fact that the woman *rides* the beast shows clearly enough that she is in control. If she represents the papal church—and this seems most consistent throughout—then the long dream of the papacy is found here to be fully realized. She has not

only ecclesiastical, but also temporal authority. The purple and scarlet in which she is arrayed are the symbols of royalty and earthly glory. She is also decked, literally, *gilded* "with gold and precious stones and pearls." These are the symbols of divine truth: but here they are only seen in outward adornment for which there is no inner corresponding reality. She holds in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication. One has but to look into the pages of history to find how the introduction of these abominations has marked the Romish church in every stage of her history. In fact the fundamental doctrines of the Romish church are not only opposed to evangelical Christianity; but they are abominations of the worst character, and correspond exactly with the pagan and idolatrous practices from which they were derived. The woman is further characterized as having upon her forehead a name written: "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." The word Babylon means "confusion," and, therefore, Babylon the great is nothing but "confusion the great."

Romanism is characterized not only by abominations, but by mystery. The whole system is shrouded in inextricable confusion. Both mystery and abomination are manifest in such teaching; as, the mediation of human priests between God and man; baptismal regeneration; the celibacy of the theurgic priest; the doctrine of purgatory; apparitions of deities and saints; the worship of these and of the virgin mother; auricular confession and priestly absolution.

Her name is *Mystery,* but it is written on her forehead, so that all may see it. By the mystery of her performances she has held the superstitious in captivity. A little magic of priestly power, and behold, the bread and wine of the eucharist are transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ. Mysterious and without meaning are such vagaries; as, the constant signing with the form of the cross and the adoration paid to it; the turning to the east in worship; the placing of the lights on either side of the altar but not in the center; and the use

of incense. These are mysteries, truly enough, and all of them can be easily traced to their pagan source of origin. The use of holy water, the exhibition of mystery plays, and the carrying of images in processions, originate likewise in paganism; and they are all of priestly design to attract the eye, while the heart remains unreached. The great central doctrine of Romanism is salvation by one's own works and sufferings. To reach heaven through a tower built by their own hands was the attempt made by the company that first appeared on the plains of Shinar. God in judgment turned their language into confusion, and the word "Babel," or "Babylon," defines the judgment falling on every effort since to reach heaven by works, whether they be wrought by men of the Romish church, or of any other ecclesiastical system. The Romish church is the most conspicuous illustration of the effort to rebuild the old tower of Babel, and the confusion everywhere manifest in her system is the result of that attempt. Thus the mystery of Romanism is here branded as Babylon. It is, however, "Mystery, Babylon." The old evil, but not so open and straightforward.

What further characterizes the woman is so plain, that even Romanists are forced to accept the application of it to themselves. "I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great wonder." Surely no one, with the long and bloody record of Romish history before them, can fail to see the force of the expression: "Drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." This has always characterized Rome, when not under restraint of temporal authority as she now is, but let Rome be given full field to work out in practice what her doctrines teach, and there would be enacted once more the same violent and fanatical persecutions as of old. Rome is, of necessity, intolerant. She claims to be the bride of Christ and, therefore, the mistress of the world. As if unconscious of her infidelity to Christ, she has grown into an enormous system of

ever increasing power and world-wide influence, and, when the true Church of Christ has been called out of the world, this mysterious system, perhaps gathering into herself all the rest of the apostate mass of Christendom, shall be found in full control of the imperial power of the last days. Directed by Satan, and under his energy, Romanism shall gain temporal control for a brief period, and then, as here predicted, shall be destroyed.

The apostle interprets for us the mystery of the woman and the beast that carried her. The beast is identified by the seven heads and ten horns. Throughout Revelation there is but one political beast. This political beast is the entire Roman empire or the imperial head of that empire, and the context must determine which of these two is intended. For example, it is obvious that the imperial head is he that is cast alive into the burning lake. In every case the context is sufficiently clear to keep us from error. It is not difficult to understand the expression: "The beast which thou sawest, was, and is not, and is about to rise out of the abyss and go into destruction." This statement is equally applicable to the whole Roman empire, or to the imperial head of it. The rule of the woman, as has been well said, necessarily destroys the beast character while it lasts. This explanation has been given, and accepted by some, as sufficiently satisfactory. Rome pagan, in its revived form, is bestial in its character; while Rome papal, whatever it be in reality, retains thoughout the *human* form. When, therefore, the woman rides the beast, it shall, during the period of her rule, cease to be bestial in appearance. John's point of vision, being the time of the woman's rule, is still future. The ecclesiastical government, with temporal authority subject to it, shall for the time being deprive the beast of power, and this justifies the expression, "The beast that was, and is not." Its existence as bestial in form continues until it comes under ecclesiastical control of the woman, and so during the time of her rule can be spoken of as, "is not." The destruction of the woman is followed by the revival of the

empire in its *bestial* form, and this is spoken of as a rising out of the abyss and a going into destruction.

There is, however, another view that may be taken which is equally satisfactory, if not more so. The beast, let it be remembered, is either the Roman empire, or its personal head. We of course know there was a time when that empire had an existence. At the present time this empire is not, but, after the removal of the Church, it shall be restored under satanic energy, and therefore can be spoken of as rising out of the abyss, and subsequently going into destruction. This representation may apply either to the empire itself, or to the imperial head of it.

It is generally agreed that the seven heads represent the seven hills of Rome, and this view is supported by the statement that "the seven heads are seven mountains whereupon the woman sitteth." They are also interpreted as being "seven kings," of whom five had fallen, one being in existence at the time the apostle wrote, and another to come at some future period. The beast, moreover, is here identified with *one of his heads.* This is an important fact to consider. The heads are not introduced into the picture in order to convey the idea that the beast had seven heads at one and the same time. As a matter of fact he never had the seven heads all at once. Though spoken of as having seven heads he is, nevertheless, a single-headed beast, and the heads are here mentioned for the purpose of interpretation which is divinely given when John declares these heads to be either seven hills, or seven kings. The seven heads are not synchronous, but consecutive. They are kings, and one follows another. Five had fallen before John's time. Another was in existence when he wrote, and the seventh was yet future. The beast is next declared to be an *eighth* head and yet one of the seven. Of this an explanation has already been given. Rome declined and fell under the sixth form of empire. It will revive under a ***seventh*** form. The imperial head shall, of course, be the seventh head. Receiving a death-stroke which is afterwards healed, he shall

return to power as the *eighth* head. Thus it is easily seen how "the beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth, and *is of the seven.*"

There is next given an interpretation of the horns. They are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet, but receive authority as kings one hour with the beast. Surely this is plain language, and not to be confused by the interjection of mere human opinion. Ten kings, reigning over as many separate kingdoms, shall be found in existence, and perhaps coextensive with the revived Roman empire. The kings of these separate kingdoms shall enter into an alliance, and with one mind give their power and authority to the beast. "These"—the beast and the ten tributary kings—"shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is Lord of lords and King of kings." This victory over the beast and the allied kings is brought before us in the nineteenth chapter.

Our attention is next called to the waters where the harlot is seated. These are interpreted, and are "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." This proves, as definitely as language can, that the nations of the earth are yet to be generally, if not indeed universally, papalized. The tendency has long been in that direction. We may well believe that in the coming years the tide will flow with ever-accelerating speed. The probabilities are that whatever makes profession of being the church, after the removal of the true believers, shall speedily become subject to papal rule, so that the whole ecclesiastical system that professes allegiance to Christ in these last and awful days shall be popish in spirit and in doctrine. This, at any rate, appears to be represented by the harlot sitting on the waters. However widely extended her jurisdiction, the papal see shall remain in the literal city of Rome.

The horns, in their being coextensive, differ from the heads. As a matter of fact these ten kings, confederated under one head, *constitute* the beast. He is represented either by this confederated kingdom, or by the individual ruler over it.

These ten kingdoms constitute the sphere of temporal dominion exercised by the apostate church. Her rule over them, though long dreamed of, is of short duration. The ten kings shall "hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire; for God hath put into their hearts to do his mind, and to act with one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be completed." We are not suffered to have any opinion of our own in reference to the future history and final destiny of this harlot who claims to be the Church of Christ. She began in bridal relationship with Him, but she ends finally in an awful apostasy, which can only be represented by this gilded woman riding the beast of imperial empire.

"The woman which thou sawest is the great city that hath sway over the kings of the earth." That great city is Rome. Not merely Rome pagan, but Rome papal, which shall yet from the literal site of Rome exercise the supremacy here spoken of over the kings of the earth. Her destruction may be simultaneous with the overthrow of the literal city, just prior to the transfer of the royal seat of the beast to Babylon. Once more Nero shall hold holiday while Rome burns. The beast shall put the torch to the city, and yet be in the hand of God the instrument of her destruction. It would almost seem as if the very substructure of Rome was designed for such an awful conflagration. The following extract from *Townsend's Tour in Italy* in 1850 is quoted by Dr. Craven in Lange's *Commentary* as a confirmation of this representation: "I behold everywhere—in Rome, near Rome, and through the whole region from Rome to Naples—the most astounding proofs, not merely of the possibility, but the probability, that the whole region of central Italy will one day be destroyed by such a catastrophe (by earthquakes or volcanoes). The soil of Rome is *tufa*, with a volcanic subterranean action going on. At Naples, the boiling sulphur is to be seen bubbling near the surface of the earth. When I drew a stick along the ground, the sulphurous smoke followed the inden-

tation; and it would never surprise me to hear of the utter destruction of the southern peninsula of Italy. The entire country and district is volcanic. It is saturated with beds of sulphur and the substrata of destruction. It seems as certainly prepared for the flames as the wood and coal on the hearth are prepared for the taper which shall kindle the fire to consume them. The Divine hand alone seems to me to hold the element of fire in check by a miracle as great as that which protected the cities of the plain, till the righteous Lot had made his escape to the mountains." Such is to be the doom of Rome. In her papal and pagan character she shall be thus destroyed. This is not *Babylon,* the straightforward, out-spoken enemy of Israel such as Babylon of old was, but *Mystery,* Babylon. Babylon, as a literal city and the final seat of imperial power, comes before us and receives judgment in the following chapter. What we have here is the connecting link between the fall of ancient Babylon and the revival of that same city for the fulfillment of prophetic Scriptures concerning it. The passing away of Mystery, Babylon is followed by the appearance of Babylon palpable and literal. Literal Babylon on the Euphrates comes into remembrance before God after Mystery, Babylon on the Tiber has been overthrown. The passing away of the one, and the reappearing of the other, would seem to be indicated in the following prophecy: "Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is the ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance in all the land: (and behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead:) and this is a woman sitting in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is Wickedness; and he cast her down into the midst of the ephah: and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, there came forth two women, and the wind was in their wings; now they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth

and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build her an house in the land of Shinar: and when it is prepared, she shall be set there in her own place" (ZECH. 5:5-11. R. V.).

This woman in the ephah is an instructive illustration of the scarlet woman under consideration, if, indeed, she is not identical with her. The ephah was the largest measure in use among the Jews, and was the ordinary symbol of commerce. Papal Rome, by the cumulation of her unholy traffic, reaches, in the last days, her exalted position over the nations. This, at the same time, shall fill up for her the measure of her iniquity. In this respect she may be represented by the woman in the ephah who is spoken of as "Wickedness." The ephah is in the hands of two other women, who have powerful wings like the unclean stork. The wind is in their wings, and by these they are borne to the land of Shinar, where a base is found for the wickedness personified by the woman in the ephah. It is clearly evident that the evil here represented is not exterminated, but is only temporarily suppressed. It is simply a transfer of *base*. The destruction of the papal system is not the annihilation of the evil. It is only the surcease and supersedure of it in that particular form of manifestation. The evil immediately reappears, but in another form. Before the overthrow of the papacy, all true believers shall have been removed to heaven. The iniquity manifest in the papal church shall, after her destruction, reappear no longer in the form of a *mystery*, but in open, defiant reality. As in the French Revolution, liberty shall degenerate into the extreme of license. When France declared there was no God, and made shipwreck of her faith, she sank by the weight of her iniquity into a turbulent sea of human passion. A veiled woman, adorned in gorgeous garments, was brought before the Convention, and introduced as the only true object of worship. She was taken to the high altar of Notre Dame, and divine honors paid her. To such extravagance and

folly wild passions, when no longer restrained of God, drive men.

The two women that carry away the one imprisoned in the ephah may well represent the atheism and superstition that shall be so fearfully manifest in the last days. The wings are symbols of strength and rapidity of action, but the most significant thing said of them is: *The wind was in their wings.* Satan is the prince of the power of the air, and it was he whom Christ rebuked on the lake rather than the impersonal elements. Destructive forces, such as wind and fire and flood, are, to some extent at least, under the control of Satan, and we may be sure that the power by which these stork wings are borne originates with him. Rapidity and strength, under satanic direction, shall strip Babylon of the hypocritical veil that has disguised her true character, and she shall stand forth in all her old enmity against God.

The ephah is taken to the land of Shinar. Shinar in its significance is strictly Babylonian. It was the original base of evil and is to become the final one. The building of the house in Shinar would seem to point to the erection of a world's temple for the last great parliament of religions. The word *house,* defining her abode, is the word employed to designate a heathen temple. It is fitting that the land of Shinar, where man was first found in rebellion against God, should be the scene and center of man's final fall into devil-worship. Babylon shall then stand forth in its real character as the open, and defiant antagonist of God and of Christ.

This interpretation of the vision in Zechariah is at least in harmony with what we find in Revelation. The woman in the ephah and the woman riding the beast appear to be one and the same. Revelation carries us further than the vision of Zechariah. Mystery, Babylon falls, and then literal Babylon comes into remembrance before God. This, of necessity, implies the reconstruction of the city. It is absolutely impossible exegetically to force the language of the eighteenth chapter in such a way as to make it a part and continuance of the

seventeenth. The identity of the judgments in these two chapters cannot be sustained, and the general tenor of prophecy elsewhere warrants the belief in the restoration of Babylon. This is no greater tax upon our reason than the thought of a restored Israel and Jerusalem. These last two must be restored in order to make good the oracles of God; and so also must Babylon come once more upon the scene in order to meet the full shock of the prophetic judgments in the same infallible Word. The scarlet beast of the world-empire shall first have put upon its neck the galling yoke of ecclesiastical despotism, and then, escaping from this, shall, with horned front of the aurochs, plunge madly on.

XXX

THE FALL OF BABYLON

After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory; and he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and become the dwelling place of demons and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird; for all the nations have drunk of the wine of the fury of her fornication; and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her; and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the power of her luxury. And I heard another voice out of heaven saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye partake not of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: for her sins have been heaped up to heaven, and God hath remembered her unrighteous deeds. Render to her as she also hath rendered, and double to her double according to her works. In the cup which she hath mixed, mix to her double. As much as she hath glorified herself and lived luxuriously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore in one day shall her plagues come: death and sorrow and famine, and she shall be burnt with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth who have committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her, shall weep and mourn for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city Babylon, the mighty city, because in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, because no one buyeth their merchandise any more,—merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones; and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet; and all thyine wood, and every article of ivory, and every article of most precious wood, and of brass, and of iron, and of marble; and cinnamon, and amomum, and incense, and unguent, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle, and sheep, and [merchandise] of horses, and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. And the fruits of the lust of thy soul are departed from thee; and all fair and splendid things are perished from thee, and they shall not find them longer at all. The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall stand afar off because

of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, that was clothed with fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour is so great riches become desolate. And every pilot, and every voyager, and sailors, and as many as trade by the sea, stood afar off, and cried, seeing the smoke of her burning, saying, What [city] is like the great city? And they cast dust upon their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that had ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her precious things! For in one hour she is made desolate. Rejoice over her, heaven, and ye saints, and apostles, and prophets; for God hath judged your judgment upon her. And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all; and the voice of harpers and musicians, and flute-players, and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no artificer of any art shall be found any more at all in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall be heard no more at all in thee; for thy merchants were the great men of the earth, for by thy sorcery were all nations led astray. And there was found in her the blood of the prophets and of the saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.—(Chapter 18.)

THE fall of Babylon has by anticipation been announced in the fourteenth chapter. There is now given detailed account of it. After the destruction of the Romish church by the ten European powers, an angel with great power comes down from heaven, lighting the world with his glory, and crying with a mighty voice: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and become the dwelling place of demons and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird." To meet the requirements of this prophecy, Babylon must be lifted from its present condition of desolation. It shall then become the habitation of demons. The demons, now at liberty, are denizens of the air (EPH. 6:15. Marg.) and the others are imprisoned in the pit of the abyss. (REV. 9:1-11). Whether expelled from the heavenly places, or delivered from the pit, Babylon shall become their habitation. It is even more than

a habitation, for the word "hold" is, literally, a watch-place, or station, where they assemble for the last desperate resistance against God.

Attention has been called to Jeremiah's prophecy, in which the judgment that overwhelms Babylon is shown to be the result of *exciting against her a destroying spirit.* Such is the literal meaning of the first verse of the fifty-first chapter of his book. The demons introduce the desolating evils which provoke the unsparing judgment of God, and this fact is confirmed by various prophecies. The one under consideration is enough for the purpose.

According to the view of the American Editor of Lange's *Commentary,* the events symbolized in this chapter await future fulfillment. He says: "Nothing in the history of the world has occurred which adequately meets the symbolization. A comparison of this section with the one in Jeremiah, suggests the thought that by the *glorious Angel* of vers. 1-3 may be symbolized a Divinely called and gifted man, or body of men, who, in the spirit of the old Prophets, shall declare the approaching fall of the spiritual Babylon."

But why put the word *spiritual* before Babylon? Scripture is sufficient of itself, and what is given us concerning Babylon ought not to be confused by the interjection of unauthorized words. Spiritual Babylon—a term that may apply equally to New York or London—is of course an easier concept than the literal Babylon. The Bible has been mystified more by what has been *read into it* than by what has been read out of it. The necessity of interjecting the word "spiritual" before Babylon arises from the supposed identity of the judgment in this chapter with that of the seventeenth. We must insist, however, that the *city,* and not the woman, is before us in the eighteenth. Moreover, the city, with which the woman is identified, is not Babylon, but Rome. Rome has neither answered, nor could she do so, to the terms employed in this prophecy. This fact is clearly recognized by Dean Alford. Speaking of the lamentation of the merchants, he says: "It must not for a

moment be denied, that the character of this lamentation throws a shade of obscurity over the interpretation, otherwise so plain from the explanation given in chapter 17: 18. The difficulty is however not confined to the application of the prophecy to Rome papal, but extends over the application of it to Rome *at all,* which last is determined for us by the solution given in chapter 16: 18. For Rome never has been, and from its very position never could be, a great commercial city. I leave this difficulty unsolved, merely requesting the student to bear in mind its true limits and not charge it exclusively on that interpretation which only shares it with any other possible one. The main features of the description are taken from that of the destruction of and lamentation over Tyre in Ezek. 27, to which city they were strictly applicable."

In this interpretation the difficulty lies in the effort to force a wrong application of words. All is plain enough if the language of the chapter be allowed its evident significance. It is, as all admit, a prophecy of the *future,* and cannot be made to adapt itself to any preconceived opinion. It cannot be forced to apply to something other than the Holy Spirit intended. The terms of the prophecy must of necessity be in harmony with the Old Testament predictions. Babylon of old never had any fall commensurate with the language announcing it. Dean Stanley, who is liberal enough in the use of language for descriptive purposes, admits that the facts of history do not justify the language of the prophets in reference to Babylon. There is certainly no obscurity in the following prophetic statements:

"It shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. No man shall abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein" (JER. 50: 39-40).

"Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the

Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there" (Is. 13: 19-20).

In full view of all these prophecies Stanley says: "No such desolation in the literal sense followed on the Persian conquest. For two centuries more Babylon remained to be a flourishing city, the third in the Empire; shorn, indeed, of its splendor, its walls reduced in height, its gates removed, but still the wonder of the world, when it was seen by Grecian travelers in the next century, or when, yet later, it was on the verge of reinstatement in its metropolitan grandeur by Alexander. Then came the fatal blow struck by the erection of the Greek city Seleucia on the Tigris; and from that time the ancient capital withered away, till, in the first century of the Christian era, it was but partially inhabited, though still retaining within its precincts a remnant of the Jewish settlers. In the fourth century it became in great measure a hunting park for the Persian Kings, but its irrigation still kept up the fertile and populous character of the district. It was not till the Middle Ages, when a Jewish traveler (Benjamin of Tudela) once more visited the ruins, that it was seen in the state in which it has been ever since—a wide desert tract, interrupted only by the huge masses of indestructible brick, its canals broken, its rich vegetation gone; the habitation of the lions, the jackals, the antelopes of the surrounding desert. In detail of time and place, the predicted destruction did not literally come to pass. It was neither so early nor so complete in all its parts, as might have been inferred, and as has been sometimes represented. But it is remarkable that, alone of the many pictures of ruin which the Prophets foreshadowed for the enemies of their country, this has, after a delay of sixteen centuries, and now for a period of seven centuries, been almost literally accomplished. Damascus and Tyre, though menaced with a desolation no less complete, have never ceased to be inhabited towns, more or less frequented. Petra is again the resort of yearly visitors. It is true that even Babylon has *never ceased* to be inhabited. Hillah, a

town with a population of five thousand souls, is within its walls, and the Arabs still wander through it. But in its general aspect the modern traveler can add nothing to the forebodings of the Hebrew prophets." *

This representation is in strict accord with the facts of history, and we are obliged therefore either to accuse both Isaiah and Jeremiah of having given us an overdrawn prophecy, if not an inaccurate one, or else admit the possibility of a future Babylon whose doom shall fully vindicate the terms of the Old Testament prophecies, and that shall tally in the last detail, item by item, with what is given us by John in the Apocalypse.

Just what proportions Babylon of the future shall assume, and to what extent it shall surpass in pride and luxury its prototype, remains for the future to disclose. Human judgment as to this, if it be not based upon the declarations of the prophets, is of no value whatever. We are at liberty neither to add to, nor to take from, the words these prophets have given us. They "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and let man think what he will, Babylon must be restored in order that she may fall in a manner to fulfill to the last letter the predictions concerning her. Before judgment overwhelms her, a voice from heaven is heard, saying: "Come out of her, my people, that ye partake not of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: for her sins have been heaped up to heaven, and God hath remembered her unrighteous deeds." In her there may be those of whom God can say "my people" and they are called to come out of her before the judgment falls. The stroke that annihilates the apostate church, in accordance with the suggestion of the last chapter, is one that involves the overthrow of literal Rome. She and the papal system are at the last, for the purpose of judgment, one. Babylon, the great metropolitan city resurrected for the doom that awaits her, will naturally be an asylum for the refugees from Rome. The good and bad alike shall flock

* *History of the Jewish Church,* Vol. III, page 59.

there when Rome falls, and the call to come out of Babylon is to God's people before the judgment descends.

"God hath remembered Babylon." As a matter of fact, God has never forgotten her, from the time when the first tower builders assembled on the plains of Shinar, until over her the bells toll in judgment. Her judgment is retributive, stroke upon stroke, and to her shall be rendered as she hath rendered, and double to her double, according to her works. The torment and sorrow that shall overtake her shall be in exact proportion to the extent in which she hath glorified herself and lived in luxury. Ruin comes when she is making the proud boast: "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." This conforms with the prophecy of Isaiah: "And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: but these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments" (Is. 47:7-9).

This proud boast is the stultiloquy of her madness. It is the knell of her doom. She has fallen into the hands of One who is able to strip from her the tinsel trappings in which she has arrayed herself. *Strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.* "And the kings of the earth who have committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her, shall weep and mourn for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city Babylon, the mighty city, because in one hour is thy judgment come."

In fulfillment of the second Psalm the kings of the earth are banded together in their last confederacy. Alford says: "It can hardly be imagined that the kings should bodily stand

and look as described, seeing that no combination of events contemplated in the prophecy has brought them together as yet." This he notes as "a feature in the prophecy" that is "an objection to the literal understanding of its details." The objection to the literal understanding of its details has force only when Babylon is confounded with Rome, either pagan or papal. Furthermore, there *has* been "a combination of events" that has brought together the kings of the earth. When the sixth vial is poured out upon the Euphrates, the waters are dried up to prepare the way for them. Then from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet there go forth spirits of demons unto the kings of the whole habitable earth, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God Almighty. It is this assemblage of the kings who are here seen wailing over the burning of Babylon.

The destruction of the city means also the destruction of the world's commerce, and the utter disorganization of the whole social system. The merchants join in the lamentation over her, and there is given us an itemized list of merchandise, which speaks plainly of the "abundance of her delicacies" by which these merchants were enriched. They testify also to the extent of her commerce, and this fact alone excludes Rome from consideration. Babylon was a commercial and manufacturing city. Babylonian monarchs knew the value of canals, and the vast empire over which they reigned arose upon alluvial plains kept fertile by an extensive system of irrigation and drainage. According to Herodotus, the royal canal was wide and deep enough to be navigable for merchant ships. Alexander enlarged these canals for his fleet; and they may again be opened for commercial use. The royal palace was magnificently decorated with statues, and furnished with luxuries that were the result of world-wide conquest. The hanging gardens were one of the well-known wonders of the world. The inhabitants were notorious for luxurious living and self-indulgence. Ancient writers have abundantly

confirmed the Scriptures by bearing witness to the corruption of the Babylonian morals. We may be sure that the Babylon of the future, as exhibited to us here in Revelation, will not be less imposing in commercial grandeur and luxury than of old. These various items, which are brought before us one by one, might doubtless suggest the varied ways in which Babylon shall yet adapt herself to the various characters that shall be found in her at the last. These are the fruits of the lusts of her soul, but they shall depart from her, and all the fair and splendid things shall perish from her and shall not be found at all. The merchants of the earth wail because of the desolation fallen upon the city; once "clothed with fine linen and purple and scarlet." In one hour her great riches shall sink into utter oblivion. The wail of the merchants is followed by another from the pilots, and voyagers, and sailors upon the sea. They, too, have been enriched by her commerce, and lament together over the completeness of her fall. While the kings of the earth, and the merchants, and the sea traders lament: heaven is filled with praise because of her overwhelming destruction. "Rejoice over her, heaven, and ye saints, and apostles, and prophets; for God hath judged your judgment upon her."

The last vision of the chapter shows us how absolutely Babylon shall sink to rise no more. "A strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all." The symbolism is evidently borrowed from the prophecy of Jeremiah. Seraiah was commanded to read the prophecy at Babylon, and then to bind it to a stone and cast it into the Euphrates. The action was to be accompanied by the words: "Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not arise from the evil that I will bring upon her" (JER. 51:64).

Jeremiah and John have under contemplation one and the same judgment. No such utter annihilation of Babylon took place when the city was captured by the Persians. Jeremiah

and John have before them the same divine judgment and it is a *future* one. If the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the fall of Babylon, then, of course, there is no future Babylon to which the prophecy of John can apply. This supposition has led to the regarding of Babylon as Rome, or, more generally and much more vaguely, as "the whole kingdom of evil." A literal Babylon disposes of such vagaries, and opens the way for a consistent and harmonious interpretation of the text throughout. The symbolic act of the angel indicates the final and absolute overthrow of Babylon from which there is no possibility of recovery.

Six times over, the solemn words "no more" toll out, like a funeral knell, the perpetual desolation of the city. The city shall be found "no more." The strains of music shall be heard "no more." The mechanic's craft shall be "no more." The grinding of the millstone shall be heard "no more." The lamp-lighted feasts shall be "no more." The bridal joys shall be "no more." Surely there is no need of comment where language is as plain as this. It means the utter annihilation of the city together with all that characterizes it. Not without reason does this awful doom fall upon her: "For thy merchants were the great men of the earth, for by thy sorcery were all nations led astray. And there was found in her the blood of the prophets and of the saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." God judges in the most unsparing way this final storm center of the kingdom of evil. It is to be noted that this judgment is *absolutely* of God, whereas the judgment of Mystery, Babylon is *instrumentally* by men. There can be no identification of the two without the mystification that has so generally confused the interpretation of the Book of Revelation.

In the Preliminary Remarks to the Second Division of Lange's *Commentary,* the author says: "Since the first thing to be established, in a general work on the Apocalypse, is the *Exegetical* point of view in which we should regard the Book, it is self-evident that the Doctrinal apprehension and the Homi-

letical application of the Scripture in question are conditioned upon the secure establishment of the Exegetical result." Illustrating the failure to find homiletic and doctrinal material wherever the exact "exegetical result" has not been established, he says: "It is an unquestionable fact that the modern, ostensibly critical, synchrono-historical apprehension of the Book has, in great measure, neutralized and, so to speak, compromised its doctrinal side; thus Schleiermacher, DeWette, *et al.*, assign a very moderate value to this Scripture. This view leaves but a few isolated passages even to Homiletics; and even those passages can be made use of only with a certain inconsistency, the canonical character of the Book being questioned.

"The servile adherents of the orthodoxy of the seventeenth century occupy a similar relation toward the Book. According to their assumptions, the idea of a transition-period intervening between the present and the future æon, of a true Millennium, and of a special hope for the return of the people of Israel, is utterly out of the question. The last day must be *one single day*. In this single day, the whole world must be utterly destroyed and replaced by an entirely new world. A Millennium is regarded as conflicting with the XVII. Article of the Augsburg Confession. Gehenna, it is maintained, coincides with the realm of the dead, and is entirely complete and ready for inmates in the midst of Time. Now when it is seen that these and the like assumptions are, contrasted with a vital conception of Holy Scripture, and especially of the Apocalypse, contracted ideas of a servile letter-faith, or an exegetical tradition-faith, the consequence is self-evident: not much secure ground is left in the Apocalypse for doctrinal arguments and homiletical demonstrations."

In opposition to all this, it is claimed, and against all gainsayers, that a transition-period, intervening between this present Christian age and the Millennial kingdom of Christ, is an "exegetical result" that can be established by the surest Scriptural evidence; and from this point of view the Book

should be regarded. The ignorance of such a transition-period, or the failure to see the necessity for it, is responsible for the profound confusion in the "synchrono-historical apprehension of the Book," as well as in the assumptions of the "servile adherents of the orthodoxy of the seventeenth century." Such a transition-period, corresponding to the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy, is not only not "utterly out of the question," but it makes possible an harmonious and consistent interpretation against which, so far as the writer can see, no objection can be successfully maintained; and in which there is no strain upon the language, nor the slightest reduction of its full force. It is, surely, more honoring to God's Word to believe in a future fulfillment of promises, than to charge the prophecies with an exaggerated verbal expression, which in reality makes them void. If Satan is to be cast out from the heavenly places to which, as Scripture fully affirms, he now has access, then surely it is not difficult to conceive of the evil of which he is the author being headed up, and concentrated in one final storm center on the earth. It is also quite conceivable that this should be on the river Euphrates. There is no more appropriate place for this last manifestation of evil against God than at the central seat of this ancient empire, whose imperial head proudly said: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (DAN. 4:30).

Surely it is fitting that there, in that self-same region, the last imperial head of the world's empire, who manifests a like independence of God, should be overwhelmed with divine judgment, and, with all the evil connected with him, be swept from the earth. A conception such as this is alone worthy of the magnificent language which testifies to the extent of Babylon's greatness, and to the utter desolation of her overthrow. Nothing that has fully exhausted prophecy has yet overtaken Babylon, and it is perfect folly to attempt to convince people of the verbal accuracy of Scripture, and, at the same time,

expect them to believe that the prophecies have been literally fulfilled. The return of the Jews to the holy land, and their establishment there in renewed expectation of the Messiah, and opposition to this centered in a literal Babylon on the Euphrates, is a conception alone worthy of the Scripture statement. If the details of the prophecy cannot be seen clearly, yet the broad features of it are before us, and, instead of "an utter impossibility" of there being an intervening period between this present Christian dispensation, and the future kingdom of Christ, it is, in order to harmonize the various voices of prophecy, an absolute necessity to have this very interval. Prophetic history requires time as well as place for fulfillment, and such an interval provides it. The Book of Revelation cannot be correctly interpreted from any other exegetical point of view. Babylon of old has indeed fallen, but that fall did not make manifest the full meaning of the prophecies. There is another Babylon looming up in the future, and her fall has been before us in this chapter. No strained or unnatural meaning has been given to the language, it has been allowed to have its full force, and the various voices of prophecy here blend in one harmonious testimony to the magnitude of Babylon's sins, and to the terrific judgments that shall accomplish her everlasting overthrow.

"Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the Lord" (Jer. 51:25-26).

XXXI

HEAVEN'S HALLELUJAH CHORUS

After these things, I heard as the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; the salvation and glory and power of our God! For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth by her fornication; and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Hallelujah. And her smoke ascendeth up to the ages of ages. And the four and twenty elders and the four living beings fell down and worshiped God who sitteth upon the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah. And there came out a voice from the throne, saying: Praise our God, all ye servants of His who fear him, small and great. And I heard as the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah, for the Lord our God the Almighty hath reigned. Let us rejoice and be glad, and give him glory; for the marriage of the Lamb hath come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And there was given to her that she should be clothed with fine linen, bright [and] pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true words of God. And I fell before his feet to worship him, and he saith unto me, See thou do it not. I am fellow-servant with thyself and thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.—(Chapter 19: 1-10.)

A LOUD voice of praise from some heavenly host greets us at the opening of this chapter. It is, literally, "the loud voice of a great multitude." This multitude is not composed of the Church and the cherubim, for these are both spoken of in such a way as to indicate that they are a company separate. It is the voice of some other heavenly host, and it strikes the first note in the Hallelujah chorus of heaven over the fall of Babylon.

Babylon, whether in mystery form, or without disguise, is morally one and the same, and is so viewed by this multitude of the heavenly host. The evil, whether exhibited in an ecclesiastical system (the apostate church), or in a political polity (the literal city), is essentially the same, but, as manifesting itself in this twofold character, it becomes the object of two distinct judgments. In *ecclesiastical* form, Babylon is the foe of Christ's true Church: in *political* form, she is the foe of Christ's kingdom.

The true Church is not the "kingdom of Christ," except in "mystery" form, even as the false church is not "the kingdom of Satan," except in "mystery" form. The kingdom of Christ is in process of development through the true Church: the kingdom of Satan is in process of development through the false church. Thus we have the *mystery* form of both kingdoms. The mystery of the kingdom of heaven is represented in the parables of Jesus. "And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath" (MATT. 13:10-12).

The true Church is glorified and enthroned when the kingdom of Christ is established: the false church is destroyed when the kingdom of Satan is manifested. In the manifestation of truth, the true Church and the kingdom of Christ are one and the same, in twofold form: in the manifestation of falsehood, the false church and the kingdom of Satan are also one and the same, in twofold form. Truth is essentially a unit and a unity, while falsehood is essentially division and diversity. The glorification of the "mystery kingdom" of Christ, and the establishment of His literal kingdom, include in their meaning the transformation and exaltation of Christ's ecclesiastical and civil friends: the overthrow of the "mystery

kingdom" of Satan, and the fall of his literal kingdom, connote the deformation and destruction of Christ's ecclesiastical and civil foes. When the true Church is lifted up, the false church is cast down: when the true kingdom is established, the false kingdom collapses and vanishes away.

Generically considered, the beast represents the ten confederate kingdoms; personally considered, he represents the reigning sovereign under whom they combine. The destruction of the imperial city is followed by the judgment of the reigning sovereign. Judicial authority to execute this judgment is vested in Christ, and He now comes personally upon the scene.

The voice of praise which opens this chapter is in view of all this, and it is heard immediately after the fall of Babylon, saying, "Hallelujah; the salvation and glory and power of our God." Hallelujah is better than Alleluia, the Greek form of the word found in the common version, for it gives full force to the Hebrew original. "Hallelujah" is composed of two Hebrew words, and it means, literally, "Praise Jehovah." The two root words are found for the first time, and appropriately so, in connection with the installation of the ark in Zion.

David "appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to celebrate and to thank and *hallelujah* the God of Israel" (1 CHRON. 16:4. Heb.). The significance of the ark, and its enthronement in Zion, have already been before us. The chapter in Revelation that is now before us applies to the time when Christ, the true Ark of the Covenant, makes His triumphal entry into the city; and the *appointed ministers* break out into a glad hallelujah. The compound word "hallelujah" has been lost in the translation of it as "Praise the Lord," but it is found in many of the Psalms where the reign of Christ is prophetically announced. In the revised version of these Psalms the word hallelujah is given in the marginal reading.

Listen, for example, to one of these outbursts of praise! "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for it is time to have pity upon her, yea, the set time is come. For thy ser-

vants take pleasure in her stones, and have pity upon her dust. So the nations shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory: for the Lord hath built up Zion, he hath appeared in his glory: he hath regarded the prayer of the destitute, and hath not despised their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come: and a people which shall be created shall hallelujah!" (Ps. 102:13-18. Heb.).

The one hundred and thirteenth Psalm, which predicts the time when heaven and earth shall be filled with Christ's glory, begins and ends with a hallelujah.

The one hundred and seventeenth, with its brief but joyful summons to the nations to praise Jehovah, ends with a hallelujah.

The one hundred and forty-seventh tells of the return of the outcast Jews to the impregnable fortress of Zion. They are established there in divine favor from which they have so long been alienated. It is for them the end of their long and devious way. In fact the five Psalms that bring the book to an end may be properly termed hallelujah Psalms. Their theme throughout is the enthronement of Jehovah amid the praise of His people. The third one of these is an invocation for the universal praise of Jehovah. It begins in heaven and from the heights, and then it is taken up by the glorious company of the angels, and these are followed by the heavenly hosts, and by the sun and moon and stars of light; and, then, ascending over all, exhortation is given to the heavens of heavens. Then rolling down to the earth the call to praise the name of Jehovah is given to all nature; the monsters and all deeps; fire and hail; snow and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling His word; mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and cedars; beasts and all cattle; creeping thing and bird of wing; kings of the earth and all races of men; princes and all judges of the earth; young men and maidens; old men and youths: "For his name alone is exalted: his glory is above the earth and heaven."

The last Psalm speaks of the vibration of the universe. Heaven and nature sing together and all kinds of musical in-

struments unite in one glorious diapason of praise. Nature, in which man has found little but discord, becomes full of the sweetest harmony in response to the presence and touch of the Second Man for whom she waits. These various instruments tell of the glorious harmonies that shall vibrate in earth when the King comes to Zion.

The hallelujahs of the nineteenth of Revelation are neither prophetic nor anticipatory; but the true answer to prophecy in their joyful salutation to the King. It is the voice of a great multitude first, and the rejoicing is over Babylon, in whose fall the God of heaven hath avenged the blood of His servants. "And again they said, Hallelujah." This is a hallelujah of the *heavenly hosts*. How manifold and glorious! Evil is judged, the glory of God is vindicated, and they are rejoicing! The voice of the multitude is followed by the voice of the Church and the cherubim, who fall down and worship God, saying, "Amen, Hallelujah." Here at last, with a hallelujah, comes pouring forth from full hearts the glorious "Amen!"

Following this sublime ratification of praise by the Church and the cherubim, a voice from the throne is heard, saying, "Praise our God, all ye servants of his who fear him, small and great." This exhortation is evidently given to a company distinct from the two already considered. The response is immediate, and John hears: "As it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." This third hallelujah chorus is identical with the "new song," sung by the one hundred and forty and four thousand upon Mount Zion, and learned by them from the harpers. This identity is established by the sound of the voice. Both here, and in the fourteenth chapter, the voice is as the voice of "many waters" and as the voice of "great thunder." We have already shown the song sung on Mount Zion to be the song of those who gained the victory over the beast, and to them the exhortation in this chapter is given.

The kingdom of darkness falls and these delivered sufferers raise their hallelujah,—"For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Everything is viewed as subject to the Lord God omnipotent. His scepter is over all. The light of His glory floods the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. Hallelujah! To accomplish this has been the undeviating purpose of the Messiah. As the Servant of Jehovah His work is over. In this service He could not fail, for He was girded by omnipotence. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Is. 42:1-4).

To the testimony of the Old Testament there is added that of the New: "He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 COR. 15:25). This is the answer to the divine declaration made in the Psalm of the Salutation (Ps. 110): "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." The limiting word is *until.* The reign of Christ is no sovereignty independent of the Father. It is entered upon by Him for the one purpose of delivering it up to the Father. "When all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 COR. 15: 28). "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (1 COR. 15:24).

Christ has no kingdom separate in authority from the Father. He inherits the Millennial kingdom as the Son of David. This kingdom is, however, earthly and transitory. The *end* referred to by the apostle does not come until the Millennial reign is over. It does not come immediately after the first resurrection; nor is this even implied by the apostle,

who, on the contrary, says: "He must reign, till he hath put *all* enemies under his feet." Enemies are found after the thousand years are finished, for, "When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (REV. 20:7-9). Then cometh the end. The kingdom is delivered up. The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Hallelujah!

The false church, which boasted of being a queen and no widow, which reigned in the absence of her Lord and to His dishonor, has been judged. The marriage morning of the Lamb has dawned, and His wife is seen in her bridal attire. This is announced by the voice from the throne: "Let us rejoice and be glad, and give him glory; for the marriage of the Lamb hath come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

The eternal union of Christ with the redeemed is the consummation of God's eternal purpose. The announcement here is anticipatory, for before the marriage there is a series of events that includes the battle of Har-Magedon, the binding of Satan, the Millennial reign, the loosing of Satan, the judgment of Gog and Magog, and the judgment of the dead at the great white throne. Until the King's enemies are destroyed there can be no marriage festivities. (MATT. 22: 7). When the bridegroom comes, they that are ready go in with Him to the marriage, and the door is shut. (MATT. 25:10). The events just referred to take place after this, and before the marriage supper is given. The announcement in the nineteenth chapter is in connection with the other announcement respecting the consummation of Jehovah's reign. It is, therefore, in its fitting and appropriate place. At the coming of Christ the body of our humiliation is to be conformed with Christ's body of glory. This transformation is, "According to the working whereby

he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (PHIL. 3:21). At the time we are speaking of, He will put forth power to bring all things in subjection to Himself, and by the same power we shall be changed into the image of His glory. The robes of the bride are next referred to. "There was given to her that she should be clothed with fine linen, bright [and] pure." This is declared to be "the righteousnesses of the saints." The righteousnesses of the saints are, of course, the righteous deeds, and therefore something very different from that righteousness of Christ that is imputed to us by faith. This latter is the wedding garment without which none shall sit down at the marriage feast. Quite another thing, however, is the "fine linen, bright [and] pure," in which the bride is attired.

The white robes of the palm-bearing multitude of the seventh chapter are woven out of the same material as the bridal dress, and these robes are declared to be white, because, "Washed in the blood of the Lamb." The prophet says: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Is. 64:6). The echo of the same truth is heard centuries later: "There is none righteous, no, not one" (ROM. 3:10). These filthy rags are the sinner's robes. In them he has no standing whatever before God. Another garment, as seen in the case of Joshua the high priest, is provided for him by sovereign grace. (ZECH. 3: 3-4). This is the "best robe" in the Father's house, and needs no washing. The *deeds* that are done after regeneration are in need of cleansing; and for this the value of the blood abides. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 JOHN 1:7-9). These blood-washed robes are the saints' righteousnesses to be made manifest and rewarded when Christ comes. There shall be no failure

of recognition of anything that has ever been done for His sake or in His name. "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, He shall in no wise lose his reward" (MATT. 10:41-42). God forgets nothing that has been done for the love of His Son, and each noble and generous thought and word and deed shall enter into the fabric of those robes that are worn by the saints in the day of their eternal manifestation. How the knowledge of this ought to stimulate our heart's affections, and cause us to rejoice when we remember that, where no recognition has been given by men in whose behalf we have wrought, there shall be, in the final awards of His grace, nothing overlooked of God.

The apostle is instructed to write: "Blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true words of God." The margin refers us to a similar announcement in Luke's Gospel: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (LUKE 14:15). Are we to regard the whole company of the called as constituting the bride? Or, do these called ones refer, in distinction from her, to guests at the wedding? Alford thinks the bride is the same as "the sum of the guests." Lange says: "The Church in its unitous form is the Bride; in its individual members, it consists of wedding guests."

A double consciousness would be needed to get any meaning out of such a statement. There is nothing whatever to warrant or even to suggest such an identity. On the other hand, the words "bride" "guests," as ordinarily used, would seem to indicate a designed distinction between them. Christ has other relationships than that to the Church. The figure of marriage is a familiar one in Old Testament Scripture, and is there, without question, used in reference to Christ and *Israel*. We surely cannot press the figure of marriage to mean more than

the unity implied therein between Christ and the redeemed, whether they be Israel or the Church. If Israel, as distinct from the Church, *is* to be brought into such unity with Christ, then there is every justification for the use of such figurative language in reference to Israel. In view of this we cannot be positive of the identity of the company that here constitutes the bride. The Church, unquestionably, is the body of *guests* at the great supper. (LUKE 14). This is true also of her at the marriage feast, (MATT. 22), where the bride is not in view; but this, however, does not imply that she is to be identified with "the sum of the guests." In reference to this figure of marriage between Christ and His people Lange well says: "Three elements, above all things, pertain to the constitution of the idea. First, the personal relation between the Lord and His people. Secondly, perfect oneness on the part of His people. Thirdly, their receptivity, conditioned by homogeneousness. Hence it is also evident that the marriage must be blessedness, in the reciprocal operation of a spiritual fellowship of love."

This relationship, according to Scriptural testimony, is to exist between the Lord and Israel as well as between the Lord and the Church. In all ages past there have been true Israelites that cannot be righteously identified and condemned with the nation in the rejection of the Messiah. They are "the spirits of just men made perfect," distinct from the Church, but eternally united to Christ in glory as much as the firstborn ones whose names are written in heaven. (HEB. 12:23). The relation is just as much *bridal* for Israel as it is for the Church. The thought of a double marriage, one between Christ and Israel, and the other between Christ and the Church, need not confuse us. In this event, the company that constitutes the bride of the one marriage would constitute the guests at the other. When Christ shall take Israel into eternal union with Himself, the Church shall be there as "the called." When Christ shall take the Church into a like eternal union, Israel shall be there as "the guests." In either case, "Blessed are

they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." Israel, after her long exile from God, is to be brought back into such an acknowledged relationship to Christ. Of this fact we are assured by the words: "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi (that is, my husband); and shalt call me no more Baali (that is, my Lord). For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God" (Hos. 2:14-23).

In this testimony Hosea is not alone. Another prophet rapturously sings: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a

royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, (that is, My delight is in her), and thy land Beulah, (that is, Married): for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Is. 62:1-5). When our Lord shall take unto Himself Israel to whom He has plighted this troth, it will be one of our richest blessings to be present and to rejoice in the bridal festivities.

Marveling at the faith of the Gentile centurion, in contrast with the wretched unbelief in Israel, Jesus said: "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (MATT. 8:11-12). May not these words suggest to us the time of Christ's marriage with the Church, when the literal seed of Abraham shall find their blessing in being the invited guests?

However difficult it be to determine whether Israel or the Church is intended in the nineteenth chapter of Revelation, we cannot overlook the various Scriptures that bear witness to the fact that Israel is to enter into such a bridal relation with Christ. "And he saith unto me, These are the true words of God." This is the divine confirmation of the testimony that declares the blessedness of those who shall be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The vision of this so fills the soul of John that he is overcome, and he falls at the feet of the speaker in worship. In this he is instantly checked: "See thou do it not. I am fellow-servant with thyself and thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

The meaning of this last sentence is thus given by Alford: "The testimony borne to Jesus by these fellow-servants, men

and angels, is the spirit of prophecy." He further says: "There is no real difficulty in this saying: no reason for destroying its force by making 'of Jesus' subjective, and 'the testimony of Jesus' to mean 'the witness which proceeds from Jesus.' What the angel says is this: Thou and I and our brethren are all 'those who have the testimony of Jesus,' i. e. are witnesses to Jesus; and the way in which we bear this witness, the substance and essence of this testimony, is the spirit of prophecy; 'we have all been made to drink into one Spirit.' This Spirit, given to me in that I shew thee these things, given to thee in that thou seest and art to write them, is the token that we are fellow-servants and brethren. It does not follow that every one of those 'who have the testimony of Jesus' has, in the same distinguished degree, the Spirit of prophecy: but every such one *has* the same Spirit, and that one Spirit, and no other, is the Spirit of prophecy."

In the fullness of its meaning all prophecy is to find its application in the present and future glory of the Lord Jesus. The angel will accept no worship, nor greater honor than to be identified with such as be the servants of Christ. The glory of an accomplished redemption, in the restitution of all things, and the bringing of the world into its final subjection to God, belongs absolutely to Christ, and it is not to be shared either by angels or by men. Our highest glory is derived from being the servants of His will and grace. We are to worship none but God, and, in worshiping Him, we honor Christ through whom alone we become the kind of worshipers the Father is ever seeking.

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (JOHN 4:24).

"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (ROM. 8:8-9).

Having the Spirit of Christ, we have also the spirit of prophecy; and, having the spirit of prophecy, we have also the tes-

timony of Jesus; and, having the testimony of Jesus, we have also the privilege of sounding it forth until the world shall echo and reëcho the glad hallelujah that shall greet Him when He comes.

Even now He is standing at the door.

XXXII

THE KING!

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him is called, Faithful and True; and in righteousness he judgeth and maketh war. And his eyes were as a flame of fire, and upon his head many diadems, and he hath a name written which no one knoweth but he himself; and he was clothed with a garment dipped in blood; and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed with fine linen, white [and] pure. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp [two-edged] sword, that with it he may smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine-press of the indignation of the wrath of God the Almighty. And he hath upon his garment and upon his thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, Come hither, gather yourselves to the great supper of God, that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of those that sit upon them, and the flesh of all men, free and bond, and small and great. And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war with him that sat upon the horse and his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet who did signs before him, by which he led astray those that received the mark of the beast, and those that worshiped his image. The two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone; and the rest were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which [sword] proceeded out of his mouth; and all the birds were filled with their flesh.—(Chapter 19: 11-21.)

THE Second Coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is now before us. This is the harmonious testimony of nearly all interpreters. Evangelical creeds in general recognize the truth of the Lord's Second Coming. No one denies it except he be an apostate from the common faith of Christendom. The article in the

Westminster Confession of Faith is as follows: "As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin, and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity: so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come: and may be ever prepared to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen."

As to the *fact,* there can be no dispute. The sole question that divides the Church is one in reference to the *circumstances* attending His Advent. In considering the Second Advent of our Lord there is, of course, no room for any thought of the so-called *providential* coming, such as the destruction of Jerusalem, or the death of a believer. We cannot, by any such shift as this, blunt the keen edge of Scripture. Christ is coming, and that glorious truth is now to engage our attention. The events connected with it can be discovered only through a thorough and patient examination of Scripture. Our attention is first turned to the opened heavens from which He comes. There can be no possibility of mistake as to the identity of the glorious Rider of the white horse. There is One, and only One, to whom the description could apply. He is "Faithful and True." So was He called at the beginning: so is He called at the last. He is now coming forth to judge the world in righteousness. His eyes are like fire, and nothing shall escape the searching flame. He is crowned with many diadems, and this testifies to other sovereignties than that over the world. He has also an incommunicable name, and He is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood. He is girded with a sword for personal conflict, and He has come to tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. "He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."

The armies that follow Him are composed of saints both Jewish and Christian. Hitherto they have been seen as the occupants of the four and twenty thrones. The elders,

after ratifying the song of the heavenly host, are no longer seen as elders. They now appear as "the armies of heaven" following their Victorious Commander. The mark of their identification is the "white and pure linen" in which they are clothed.

To this one point all the beams of prophetic light have steadily and unwaveringly converged. One of these shines forth from the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah. The Hebrew prophet, in the dim ages of the past, stands on one of the hills of Judah. He is, perhaps, on the Mount of Olives where the vision is clear to the Jordan valley. He is looking down towards Edom and he sees coming up through one of the deep ravines a solitary warrior. There is so much of majesty about him that the prophet rings out the challenge: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?"

There comes sounding back the answer: "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

With the *identity* of the warrior dawning upon him the prophet cries: "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?"

To this cry is given the solemn and glorious response: "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth. I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house

of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses" (Is. 63:1-7).

This, according to the modern critics, is poetry. Yes, poetry of the loftiest strain, but in that poetry is embedded the Hebrew's conception of the coming Messiah. In this vision of Isaiah there is given only the return of the Warrior from the conflict. Of his journey *to* Bozrah there is nothing revealed. Isaiah has before him the conquering, and not the suffering, Messiah. We look back through the centuries to see the one commanding figure that rises above all others, and, Who can answer to the vision? Edom, lying on the border of Judah, was but a faint reflection of the awful cloud that hung over all men: evil, inveterate, uncompromising, on every hand; against which man could only struggle in utter helplessness. Into this stronghold of the enemy came the Son of God. He had none to help Him. He descended alone into the darkness, suffering what no human mind can ever know; but through it He passed to a glorious victory over sin and death. He is gathering the fruit of that victory now. His acquired glory is increased by every soul that puts its trust in Him, and this also shall add another voice to swell the music of redemption-song. When Jesus ascended to heaven, the conflict was not over. When he entered there, Jehovah said: "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Ps. 110:1).

The Messiah of Isaiah's vision is the Messiah of the Second Advent, and not of the First. Christ has been to the cross, but the prostration by the conquering Messiah of all of Israel's enemies, which is foretold in this prophecy, has never yet come to pass. This shall be accomplished when Christ comes again, and not before.

The armies that follow Him are robed in white. He is distinguished from them by His being clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and we shall know Him, not merely by the marks of His suffering, but by the royal robes, which proclaim His universal sovereignty.

He has also "upon his garment and upon his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." When the Magi came to Jerusalem they said: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Pilate's superscription for the cross was: "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." Whether born in a manger, or dying on the cross, or riding the white horse of universal conquest, Jesus of Nazareth is a *King*. One very significant variation in the title needs to be noted. The Magi and Pontius Pilate call Him the King of the *Jews*. There is no such limitation in the apocalyptic inscription, for the scepter has been extended over all the surrounding nations, and He is now become, not only the King of the Jews, but "*King of kings, and Lord of lords.*" The prostration of the kingdoms of this world shall demonstrate His right to the title.

He at once proceeds to judgment,—"Out of his mouth goeth a sharp [two-edged] sword, that with it he may smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the indignation of the wrath of God the Almighty."

The two-edged sword is the *word,* now to be used as the instrument of judgment. For the overthrow of the world-kingdoms there is needed but a word. That word is to be now spoken, and these kingdoms are to fall. "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" (Is. 11:4).

The Coming of Christ is followed by the utter prostration of the world-powers, and by summary judgment upon the leaders of man's rebellion. In solemn contrast with the invitation given to the marriage supper of the Lamb, an angel is seen standing in the sun, and summoning with a loud voice the birds of heaven to come and feast at the great supper of God. The word translated *fowls* in the common version is the same word used in the second verse of the eighteenth chapter, where Babylon is said to have become the habitation of demons, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful *bird*. The same word is used in the twenty-first

verse, where the fowls, after the slaughter of the opposing armies, are said to be filled with their flesh. These appear to be the only passages in which this particular word for "bird" is used. It well may represent the literal vultures that shall batten on the bodies of the slain.

In His great prophecy Jesus says: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the *eagles* be gathered together" (MATT. 24:27-28). The eagles referred to are doubtless identical with the carnivorous birds "flying in mid-heaven." Of the awful horrors of this day Isaiah thus speaks: "The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea" (Is. 34:2-6). Solemnly enough this is called the Lord's "sacrifice in Bozrah." In Revelation it is called "the great supper of God."

This means the destruction, for the time being, of all of God's enemies; and over their desolation heaven rejoices. As soon as these vultures are gathered together, the beast appears, and he has with him the allied kings of the earth, and their armies. These kings and their armies, as we have already seen, are brought together by spirits of demons. The purpose of their assemblage is made known in the declaration that they are

about to make war against Him that sat upon the horse, and against His army. In this daring attempt to rush against the bucklers of the Almighty, they illustrate the last extreme to which Satan shall drive his infatuated victims. How vain and fatuous a thing it is for a man to contend with his Maker! "Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou? If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him" (JOB 9:4, 12-13).

This confederation against Christ and His armies is the literal fulfillment of the second Psalm. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Ps. 2:2-3). The gathering point here is undoubtedly the battlefield of Har-Magedon. This battlefield, or its immediate vicinity, was famous in Old Testament history by reason of two great victories: Barak over the Moabites, and Gideon over the Midianites. It was famous also for what was considered two national disasters: the death of Saul, and the death of Josiah.

If we are to spiritualize this battlefield into some indefinite region of never-ending conflict between the Church and her enemies, it is useless to speculate about the meaning of John's vision. If Christ when He comes is to find the kings of the earth in banded rebellion against Him, what possible objection can there be to a literal location of this rebel host? That He shall find them in such rebellion is the positive declaration of Scripture; and, without occasioning any confusion of mind, we can conceive of them as brought together literally on this ancient battlefield of Israel. There they are found at the last in royal council. They have passed a resolution to break asunder the bands of God, and to cast away His cords from them; but over against this resolution the voice of God is heard saying: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

The struggle between good and evil is now to be fought out in the open. There is no longer any disguise of the combatants. At last the kingdoms of this world stand arrayed for direct battle with God and His Christ.

The conflict is short and decisive. The beast and the false prophet are taken in red-handed rebellion, and are cast into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone; and there, after the thousand years of Christ's Millennial reign, they are still. Just and equal are the ways of God. In the beginning He put questions to man who had sinned, but to the serpent that was the instrument of Satan in effecting the ruin He put none. Without any interrogation whatever the serpent was doomed. In like manner, to these willing tools of Satan in the last outburst of their impious wrath God gives no opportunity of self-defense. In their case there are no mitigating circumstances. They have lent themselves to an evil from the consequences of which there is no escape. They are permitted no defense, and in their behalf no word is spoken. Their sin has been deliberate; their alliance with Satan open and undisguised. Now, speechless before Him with whom they have contended in vain, they are taken and judged without mercy, for with such as they no mercy could avail.

After this summary judgment of the beast and the false prophet, the rest of the rebels are dealt with in strict accord with the judicial code of the court of God. They are slain with the sword. Judged according to the Word of God, they are found worthy of death. Under the blast of His breath they are swept down, and the vultures strip the battlefield of the slain. Such is the end of earth's rebellion against God. Well may the heavens rejoice when His judgments prevail and everlasting righteousness is ushered in.

There is no quiet and gradual merging of things into the peaceful reign of the Messiah. The kingdoms of this world must be cast into the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Judgment only, and judgment of the most unsparing kind, falling on principalities and powers of evil,

can drive from the heavens the stormwind of iniquity. The wrath and judgment of God can alone do this, and establish the kingdom of Christ in everlasting righteousness over the earth,—and failure to see this must come from the refusal to accept the reality of the final rebellion that shall fill up the cup of iniquity, and fit the world for the just judgment of God.

XXXIII

THE LAST JUDGMENT

And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the ancient serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years; and cast him into the abyss, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should lead astray the nations no more until the thousand years should be completed. After this he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them; and [I saw] the souls of those that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and such as had not worshiped the beast nor his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection: blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; over these the second death hath no authority, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. And when the thousand years shall be completed, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go forth to lead astray the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together unto the war, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; and fire came down [from God] out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil that led them astray was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [are]; and they shall be tormented day and night to the ages of ages. And I saw a great white throne and him that sat upon it, from whose face fled away the earth and the heaven, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened which is [the book] of life; and the dead were judged out of those things written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hades gave up the dead that were in them; and they were judged each one according to their works. And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the

lake of fire. And if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.—(Chapter 20.)

THE sentence, the execution of which is brought before us at the close of the last chapter, appears to be prior to, and distinct from, the sessional judgment of the nations recorded in Matt. 25:31-46. Antecedent to this general session, Satan also receives sentence, though final judgment is not passed upon him. An angel descends from heaven, "having the key of the abyss, and a great chain in his hand." The key, given to the fallen star of the ninth chapter, is that of the *pit* of the abyss. Here nothing is said of the pit, and the key is that of the abyss itself which represents the entire realm of the dead. The pit, since the exodus of the demons from it, has remained open and empty.

The angel lays hold of the dragon, and strips him of all disguise, and he is plainly identified with "the ancient serpent, which is the Devil and Satan." "The ancient serpent" was the Devil incarnate, and he is here tracked from the garden of Eden to the point where judgment begins to overhaul him.

What stupendous folly, to ignore the *personality* of this evil spirit! His name, whatever *alias* he may have adopted for disguise, is "the Devil and Satan." We have already had before us the Scriptures that give us more than an intimation of his original estate and rebellion. Though now about to be bound, he has not reached the limit assigned to him by divine wisdom. He is fettered with a chain, and cast into the abyss, and there confined for a thousand years. This judgment is not final, nor so summary as that passed upon the beast and the false prophet. They were cast alive into *hell*. Yielding themselves to his service, as did the serpent in Eden, they were the willing slaves of Satan, and for such there are no extenuating circumstances. Their judgment, therefore, is immediate and final. Such, too, is to be the doom of Satan when the trial of man is ended. The beast as the king of Babylon served the

devil. He occupied "the dragon's seat," and exercised the dragon's authority. He earned his wages and has now received them. This hireling prince is not, however, "the king of Babylon" contemplated by the prophetic writers. They had in view one in whom was vested original jurisdiction, even Satan himself. Their denunciations, therefore, are hurled over the head of the reigning sovereign and land upon him to whom they belong. The prophetic announcement of the humiliation of "the king of Babylon" refers not to any beastly delegate, but to Satan himself. Listen to the solemn dirge that foretells his doom! "Thou shalt take up this parable against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, the sceptre of the rulers; that smote the peoples in wrath with a continual stroke, that ruled the nations in anger, with a persecution that none restrained. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet; they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall answer and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to hell, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O day star, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst lay low the nations! And thou saidst in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the mount of congregation, in the uttermost parts of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the uttermost parts of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, they shall consider thee, saying, Is this

the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and overthrew the cities thereof; that let not loose his prisoners to their home? All the kings of the nations, all of them, sleep in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast forth away from thy sepulchre like an abominable branch, clothed with the slain, that are thrust through with the sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under foot. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, thou hast slain thy people; the seed of evil-doers shall not be named for ever" (Is. 14:4-20, R. V.).

What a requiem for the repose of a departed spirit! To what Babylonian king, as he entered the realm of the dead, was this solemn salutation given? The language cannot be forced to apply literally to any Babylonian king, not even to the beast, for he makes no descent into sheol,—as the word translated "hell" is in the Hebrew—but is cast alive into the lake of fire. On the other hand, Satan does pass into the transitional state of sheol, and the words of the prophet may apply literally to him when, deprived of his power, he is humiliated and fettered and sent shuddering into the abyss. The time of his imprisonment is declared to be a "thousand years," and he is put under this restraint, in order "that he should lead astray the nations no more until the thousand years should be completed." His term of imprisonment is thus seen to be coextensive in time with Christ's reign over the earth. The word "Millennium," meaning a thousand years, defines this period, and is used in reference to it. It is to be noted, however, that the fact of Satan's incarceration does not rest solely upon this passage in Revelation. In the Old Testament there is given an explicit declaration of the fact. For example, in Isaiah we read: "Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open,

and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously" (Is. 24: 17-23).

The punishment of "the host of the high ones that are on high" is, without question, the same as the one referred to in Revelation, only the prophecy of Isaiah goes still farther and bears witness to the fact that the whole rebel host of Satan shall be dealt with in the same way. The fact of its being a temporary punishment is also foretold by the prophet. "They shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit," (literally, "dungeon,") "and shall be shut up in prison, and after many days shall they be visited." The *pit* is the place of their confinement, and the "many days" correspond to the thousand years of Revelation. The Millennium is characterized by the entire suppression of evil; and, with this under full restraint, all nature responds to the relief that follows from the repeal of the curse. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Is. 11: 9). The judgment of the nations, and the binding of Satan are thus seen to antedate the Millennium. That Satan should be loosed from his prison at the end of the thousand years is not without its mystery. Nevertheless the declaration here is: "He must be loosed a little season." The solemn fact, whether we are able to give any reason for it or not, is here announced. The trial of man, evidently, is not yet over. Temptation, for

the time specified, shall be removed, and a reign of righteousness such as the world has never known shall follow, but human nature will not be changed by a righteous rule over the earth, and this fact the "loosing of Satan" shall demonstrate. Satan's descent and disappearance into the abyss is followed by a vision of "thrones," and to the occupants of them "judgment was given." These thrones, and their occupants, have been before us in our study of the fourth chapter.

To this company of the enthroned others are now added. "The souls of those that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and such as had not worshiped the beast nor his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand." These are the martyrs under the beast, and the survivors of his persecution, and they are now added to the number of the enthroned in heaven. They are not, however, to be confused with the Church. The Church was made perfect at the appearing of Christ. These martyrs and survivors make up the full complement of Israel. The "spirits of just men made perfect," (the spirits of the Old Testament saints), were united to their bodies in resurrection at the time of Christ's appearing. The twenty-four thrones—constituting a double twelve—are the resurrection glory-seats of both the Church and Israel. Israel's history being incomplete, the full complement to their number is now made by adding thereto the martyrs and surviving sufferers under the beast. They live and reign with Christ a thousand years. "The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years were completed." On this statement interpreters that believe in a general resurrection of the dead can throw no light. David Brown, who is regarded as one of the most eminent advocates of the post-millennial theory, interprets "the first resurrection" as "figurative," indicating "a glorious state of the Church on earth, and in its mortal state." In this unnatural forcing of language to sustain his theory he flies a flag of distress. Post-millennialists cannot escape from their perplexities by any such "figurative" resurrection. The

Scripture under consideration does not, if normally interpreted, support the opinion of a "figurative" resurrection, but rules it out of court altogether. If this were the only passage in which a "first resurrection" were mentioned, it ought to be enough: but this is not the only passage, and Scripture elsewhere declares positively that there is to be an elect resurrection, *out from among the dead.* Such is the true force of the Greek in Philippians 3:11.

Concerning "the first resurrection" Dean Alford says: "I cannot consent to distort its words from their plain sense and chronological place in the prophecy, on account of any considerations of difficulty, or any risk of abuses which the doctrine of the millennium may bring with it. Those who lived next to the apostles and the whole Church for 300 years, understood them in the plain literal sense: and it is a strange sight in these days to see expositors who are among the first in reverence of antiquity, complacently casting aside the most cogent instance of unanimity which primitive antiquity presents. As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion. If, in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned, where certain *souls lived* at the first, and the rest of the *dead lived* only at the end of a specified period after that first—if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave,—then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to any thing. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose none will be hardy enough to maintain: but if the second is literal, then so is the first, which in common with the whole primitive Church and many of the best modern expositors, I do maintain, and receive as an article of faith and hope. Blessed (see Ch. 14:13, 19:9) and holy is he that hath part in (the expression is peculiar to St. John) the first resurrection: over such persons the second death (Ch. 2:11, 21:8: and bear in mind what is said of our Lord

Himself, Rom. 6: 9) hath not power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they [shall] reign with Him (Christ) a (or, the) thousand years."

We are not to be driven from the force of such a conclusion by any difficulty that may arise from arguing from a false premise. If we are so wedded to preconceived opinions as to be unwilling to bring them into conformity with true critical exegesis such as Alford gives us, then there is an end to any possibility of a clear conception of what Scripture affirms. As a matter of fact, if the premillennial reign of Christ be admitted, there is not the slightest difficulty in the thought of a first resurrection. If Christ comes to reign, and if His saints are to reign with Him for a thousand years; then, in order to this there must, of necessity, be a resurrection from the dead. That Christ shall come to reign for that length of period, and that the saints shall reign with Him, are here affirmed; and it is not until after the thousand years are over that Satan is loosed to project his last rebellion against God. This is the plain purport of Scripture everywhere, and the affirmation here of such an interval between the first resurrection and the living again of the rest of the dead is the all-sufficient warrant for denying the simultaneity of the resurrections of the just and the unjust. Only the misery of bondage to a theory, or an unwillingness to attempt a solution of the difficulties, could blind the eyes of so many to what is nevertheless the distinct teaching of Scripture.

Nothing further concerning the Millennium is given in the Book of Revelation, and for its characterization we must look elsewhere. Many of these Scriptures have been already considered, and they are so explicit that it is almost incredible to find so much vagueness of thought. Schaff, speaking of the Messianic expectations that prevailed among the Jews, says: "The idea of a spiritual Messiah who should crush the serpent's head and redeem Israel from the bondage of sin, was changed into the conception of a political deliverer who should reëstablish the throne of David in Jerusalem, and from that

centre rule over the Gentiles to the ends of the earth. The Jews of that time could not separate David's Son, as they called the Messiah, from David's sword, sceptre and crown. Even the apostles were affected by this false notion, and hoped to secure the chief places of honor in that great revolution; hence they could not understand the Master when he spoke to them of his approaching passion and death. The state of public opinion concerning the Messianic expectations as set forth in the Gospels is fully confirmed by the preceding and contemporary Jewish literature, as the Sibylline Books (about B. C. 140), the remarkable Book of Enoch (of uncertain date, probably from B. C. 130-30), the Psalter of Solomon (B. C. 63-48), the Assumption of Moses, Philo and Josephus, the Apocalypse of Baruch, and the Fourth Book of Esdras. In all of them the Messianic kingdom, or the kingdom of God, is represented as an earthly paradise of the Jews, as a kingdom of this world, with Jerusalem for its capital." *

Jewish hopes founded on infallible Scripture cannot so easily be brushed aside. That the prophets and apostles were all wrong in their conception seems to have remained for Dr. Schaff to discover. As a matter of fact, "the idea of a *spiritual* Messiah" was *never* entertained by the Jews, and is merely a creation of this distinguished historian in order, as he seems to think, to save the prophecies from failure. Gabriel may as well be charged with being "affected" by this same "false notion." His announcement to the Virgin was: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (LUKE 1:32-33). Time shall prove, whether Gabriel and the prophets and apostles entertained a correct understanding of the promises, or whether these promises were left for correction and emendation to the laboring wits of the Church historians.

From these modern thinkers the apostles evidently differ.

* *History of the Christian Church,* Vol. I., page 155.

The apostolic conception of the Messianic kingdom is very clearly stated by Dr. McGiffert, Professor of Church History in the Union Theological Seminary, New York. He says: "It was a common belief among the Jews that the presence of the Holy Spirit would be a characteristic feature of the Messianic kingdom; that the spiritual gifts, which in earlier days were enjoyed only by favored individuals here and there, would in that kingdom be bestowed upon all. Peter was therefore on familiar ground, when he connected the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost with the advent of the Messianic age. If his hearers agreed with him that the Pentecostal phenomena indicated the Spirit's presence, they could not help agreeing with him in the conclusion drawn therefrom. But in the prophecy of Joel, which he quotes, the outpouring of the Spirit is made to precede and not to follow the 'Day of the Lord,' and it is clear, in the light of III. 19 sq., that Peter thus understood the prophecy, and that he regarded the Spirit's advent as a sign not that the promised kingdom was already established upon earth, but that its establishment was at hand. The days that were introduced by Pentecost were only preparatory; the consummation was still in the future. The Messianic realm belonged, in Peter's thought, just as in the thought of his contemporaries, not to this æon, but to another, and before its inauguration must come the day of judgment and the 'end of the world,' that is, the end of the present age. That Jesus was already Lord and Prince and Saviour did not mean that his kingdom was already a reality, and that he was exercising dominion therein, but only that he was preparing the way for its realization. By the outpouring of the Spirit he was fitting his followers for it, and making its speedy establishment possible. That outpouring was a sign of its approach, but not of its actual presence. The disciples therefore lived in the future as truly as their unconverted brethren. The Christ was yet to come to accomplish his true work. That work there is no reason to suppose that Peter and his fellows conceived in any other way than their Jewish brethren. They evidently

thought of the expected kingdom as a national kingdom, for Peter distinctly makes the advent of the Messiah dependent upon the repentance and conversion of those whom he addresses. Only when the Jewish nation has listened to the preaching of the apostles and has recognized Jesus as the Christ, can the times of refreshing come, and the Messiah return to set up the kingdom. Into the details of that kingdom Peter does not enter, but he implies that the expected Messianic judgment will take place, and he conceives the punishment of the wicked in genuine Jewish form as a 'destruction from among the people.' He speaks also of the restoration of all things, a common phrase in Jewish apocalyptic literature, and of the fulfillment of the entire range of Messianic prediction. All the blessings promised by the prophets, and longingly anticipated by the fathers, he assures his hearers they will yet enjoy, if they repent and thus secure forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Ghost. In the present is offered the opportunity not of realizing a present salvation, but of making certain the enjoyment of a future salvation. It is to make the most of that opportunity that Peter exhorts his hearers on all possible occasions." *

This representation of apostolic expectation being a correct one, Where did these convictions of the apostles come from? Did they grow out of the study of the Old Testament Scriptures? Certainly the apostles thought so, and such conviction is precisely what one should get from a thorough examination of the Messianic prophecies. The long delay of the centuries since the apostolic age seems to have made void the possibility of the realization of this hope, and some modern critics, therefore, conclude that the disciples were wrong, and that the prophetic statements on which their convictions were based were misunderstood by them. Such a conclusion is inevitable only to those who have lost faith in the true inspiration of the Bible. If prophets and apostles were uninspired, then their convictions and hopes are of little value to us. If these men,

* *The Apostolic Age*, page 62, *et seq.*

however, did write under divine guidance, and, by divine authority, did proclaim, in explicit terms, the establishment of such a Messianic kingdom, then such a Messianic kingdom *must* be set up or else Scripture be broken. This fact can be gainsaid only by such as are at issue with Christ Himself. (JOHN 10:35). The commonly accepted view of our Lord's return, if true, would disappoint every hope cherished by prophets and apostles. If His appearing is coincident with the end of the world and the beginning of eternity, as the mass of interpreters conjectures, then there is neither time nor place for the predicted Messianic kingdom. To escape from this difficulty, from which nevertheless there is no escape, these interpreters spiritualize the plain literal promises, and force the Church into a painful deformity in order to bring her into conformity to the kingdom. The interpretation presented by the writer is justified by the fact that, in addition to other considerations, it is not obliged to carry a burden of this kind. It is accordant with the thought of a "restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (ACTS 3:21). The hope of such a restitution was cherished by the apostles, and there is no possibility of the realization of this hope apart from the Personal return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

For the purpose of establishing such a kingdom Christ is coming. He shall reign for a thousand years upon the earth while Satan is bound in the abyss. The kingdom must necessarily be the one promised to Israel, and, by its establishment, Israel shall be brought into the place of God's intention, and shall become the center and channel of blessing to "all families of the earth" (GEN. 12:1-3). The reign of Christ shall be over Israel, and He shall be acknowledged also by all other nations as "King of kings and Lord of lords." With Him the saints of both dispensations, Israel and the Church, His fellow-heirs, shall find their sphere, and shall live and reign with Him a thousand years. No details are here given as to the effect of this government upon the earth, and for them

we must go to the Old Testament prophecies. What we do have is the certainty of the blessed fact of the establishment of Christ's kingdom upon earth. Earth is at last in full harmony with heaven, and the Lost Chord is found. By the ladder that unites earth and heaven, the angels of God are "ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (JOHN 1:51).

But even such a sovereignty over the earth does not change the heart of man. A righteous reign, together with all the blessings associated with it, and the full enjoyment of a world redeemed from the curse, does not avail to make man other than he is naturally, and the testing and proving of this is accomplished by the loosing of Satan after the thousand years are finished. A thousand years in prison has wrought no moral change in the nature of this evil spirit. He comes up out of his dungeon with his heart filled with the smouldering fire of hate, which immediately flames forth and kindles a revolution among the nations that are in the four corners of the earth.

These nations are represented to us in the terms "Gog" and "Magog." Respecting these Scripture is not silent. Their irruption against Israel in these last days is both foretold and described. A vast invading host from these same northern quarters has already been represented in fatuous opposition to the establishing of the kingdom. Their revolt against God was manifested in their hatred of, and antagonism to, Israel. The nations that are massed together under the same name at the end of the Millennium are such as exhibit the true nature of man when subjected to temptation. The evil still exists in the heart even though Satan is bound, but it lacks energy and daring. The old enmity is stirred up, however, when Satan is loosed, and the rebellious nature springs to the front. The rebels are assembled together, and compass "the camp of the saints and the beloved city." "The beloved city" can be no other than Jerusalem, and Jerusalem, as well as Israel, is now impregnable to any assault of Satan. *All Israel,* as the prophet assures us, shall be righteous during the reign of Christ. (Is. 60:21). This, however,

is not affirmed of the surrounding nations. The eighteenth Psalm, which prophesies of this same time, speaks of the strangers that "shall submit themselves" unto God. The word "submit" is rendered in the margin "yield feigned obedience" (HEB. lie). Consequently we are told in the next verse, "The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places" (Ps. 18:45).*

When the thousand years of righteous rule are past, and Satan once more loosed upon men, all this shall be made manifest, and the last rebellion of the earth shall be brought to an end.

"Fire came [down] from God out of heaven and devoured them." This puts an end to all revolt, and is followed by the last judgment. Satan is first dealt with, and he meets irrevocable doom. He is, "Cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [are]; and they shall be tormented day and night to the ages of ages."

Satan's punishment, as well as that of the beast and the false prophet, is, if the full force of the language be allowed, not only final, but endless. The truth of future punishment is being more and more denied, and men are seeking to escape from this doctrine, either by the theory of the restitution of all things or by the final annihilation of the wicked. How they escape from the language of Scripture it is indeed difficult to understand. The beast and the false prophet have been burning in this lake of fire for a thousand years before Satan is cast into it, and we are therefore fully assured that no material fire burns there, but a fire far more solemn than that, a fire of which that could only be the symbol. The beast and the false prophet are not consumed during the thousand years of their burning, and when the devil is consigned to the same lake in which they are, the solemn statement is: "They shall be tormented day and night to the ages of ages." This, then, is hell, "prepared for the devil and his angels" (MATT. 25:41). It

* The same thought is conveyed in Ps. 66:3; 81:15; Is. 65:20; ZECH. 14:17.

opens first to receive the beast and the false prophet. They are followed by Satan and—as Scripture implies—by his angels. Then to the same place of eternal woe are condemned those that refused the grace which sought them. To them the solemn word is: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (MATT. 25:41). "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (ROM. 6:23).

With the Millennium over, and with Satan doomed to everlasting punishment, there remains, before eternity is ushered in, one more subject for consideration. God forgets nothing, and He has not forgotten the impenitent dead who certainly did not rise at the coming of Christ, and of whom, in the Book of Revelation, no resurrection has as yet been affirmed. These impenitent dead are to be dealt with now. "I saw a great white throne and him that sat upon it, from whose face fled away the earth and the heaven, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened which is [the book] of life; and the dead were judged out of those things written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hades gave up the dead that were in them; and they were judged each one according to their works. And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

This judgment at the great white throne is that of the dead. When Christ appears, the dead "in Christ" arise, and there is no resurrection for the rest of the dead until the great white throne is set. These are now summoned to come forth and meet God. A last and general judgment, for which so many are vaguely looking, is a theory spun only from the ignorance of Scripture. For the believer in Christ there is *no* judgment. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath

eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (JOHN 5:24. R. V.). The bodies of the righteous dead are taken from their graves when Christ appears to claim them. The bodies of the impenitent dead are left in their graves and they do not live again until the thousand years are finished. In the judgment of the great white throne we have a vision of these dead as they are now assembled in resurrection before God. They are judged *according to their works.* "Enter not," says the Psalmist, "into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Ps. 143:2). Who shall stand in the Judgment and escape by his own merits the condemnation of God? Before the white throne stand the unjustified, who must be judged according to the deeds done in the body. Possibly here, too, the living saints of the Millennial age shall render their account. The judgment, however, is not for any that have been saved by grace.

"Books were opened; and another book was opened, which is [the book] of life." Here we have *books* and *book.* The dead are judged according to the "books," and those not found written in the "book" are cast into the lake of fire. The "books" are without question the books of the Bible, according to which judgment is to be passed. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (JOHN 12:48). Judged according to this standard, there is hope for none, except he be plucked as a brand from the burning and saved by grace. The "book" of life, therefore, is the book of divine grace, in which are inscribed the names of those that are the heirs of grace. If, after judgment according to the deeds done in the body, their names are not found written in that book, nothing remains for them but condemnation. The doom that awaits Satan, also awaits all men that harden themselves against the grace that would save them. With these rejecters of divine mercy it is useless to argue for the existence of eternal punishment. They

will not believe it. Their eyes are blinded by the god they serve. Indeed, even those who have been redeemed by grace are slow to accept the solemn and reiterated statements of God's Word concerning the awful, irretrievable, and everlasting condition of the lost; the smoke of whose torment is said to ascend "to the ages of ages." God's Word is not to be distorted by man's judgment, nor will God allow any human heart, however gentle, to be judge of what His heart should be. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Sodom is doomed, but judgment lingers; if peradventure ten righteous men may be found therein. Sodom's judgment shall yet overwhelm this world, and little does the world realize that for the sake of the righteous this judgment is stayed. The call for separation from what characterizes Sodom is loud and urgent. When Lot shall enter Zoar, the "sun" shall arise upon the earth, and then shall Jehovah rain "brimstone and fire" out of heaven, and the smoke of the land shall go up "as the smoke of a furnace." "This is the second death, the lake of fire." While intercession is rising, may angels of mercy hasten all lingering feet!

XXXIV

A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there is no more sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God. And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes. And there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true. And he said unto me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But for the cowardly, and faithless, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.—(Chapter 21: 1-8.)

FROM the face of Him who sat upon the throne the earth and the heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. The judgment immediately following is post-millennial, as is also the dissolution of the heaven and the earth.

In the epistle to the Hebrews there is a statement concerning the final shaking of all things. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And

this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb. 12: 25-27). The reference undoubtedly is to this time of the passing away of heaven and earth. What is unshakable shall alone remain.

This final shaking of things brings into existence the new heaven and the new earth, and these shall abide for ever. This is the final vision of Revelation, and the consummation of all. Why is it not possible for us here to emerge into the full light of assured certainty? The language is plain enough. Why are we so "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken"? Beyond the last storm lies the eternal calm. Of this we are positively assured by the apostle Peter. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a rushing noise, and the elements burning with heat shall be dissolved; the earth also and the works in it shall be burned up. All these things, then, being thus to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in holy behavior and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, by reason of which [the] heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and [the] elements shall melt away with fervent heat? But we, according to his promise, wait for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3: 10-13 Gr.).

The new heavens and a new earth, wherein *dwelleth* righteousness, succeed the dissolution of the old, and they are, without question, the subject of the present apocalyptic vision. Nor are we to confuse the description here given with that defining the condition existing during the Millennial reign of Christ. That reign is over, as is also the judgment of the wicked dead, and our eyes are fixed upon what shall abide for ever. Heaven and earth are unchangeably linked together, and the redeemed of mankind are in cloudless communion with God.

Referring to this vision Grant says: "This is manifestly a

reference to Isaiah's word: 'Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered nor come into mind.' It is but a glance, for the prophets of the Old Testament, apart from this, never seem to go beyond that kingdom which we, indeed, have learned to call 'millennial,' as having its limits defined for us in this way. For Israel, there was no such necessary limitation; there was a bright scene before them upon which their eyes should rest, assured that whatever might be beyond could only be additional blessing; and the prophet here goes on immediately to speak of God's creating 'Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy,' in terms which very plainly imply the presence of sin, and therefore not an earth upon which dwelleth righteousness, not characterized by that. But we must not on that account lose sight of the distinct character of that which the apostle here, with divine insight, brings forward as what was to be really final—an absolutely 'new heavens and new earth.' We have one more reference to it in Isaiah, and that is where the Lord promises that as the new heavens and the new earth which He will make shall remain before Him, so Israel's seed and their name shall remain. This is naturally taken by many to imply that therefore the new earth itself only speaks here of a temporary, that is, of the millennial condition. If so, it is plainly contrary to what Peter gives us of it here, for it is plain that the dissolution of the heavens and earth that are now is in order to the bringing in of a perfect condition which is to follow it. The picture that we have in the Book of Revelation is in complete accordance with this. We have only the alternative, therefore, that this is an absolute promise of God that not only the blessed of Him in Israel shall remain amongst those blessed forever (which, of course, will be true), but that their very seed and name would remain. Here then, of course, is the assertion that Israel has not merely a temporary place as a special people of His upon the earth, but that it will have such a place forever."

The dissolution of the present framework of the earth does

not necessarily imply the loss of its continuity and identity. Our mortal body is subject to a similar dissolution. "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1). "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:51-54). Here the personal pronoun *we* is the assurance of personal identity. This is not lost to us when we are clothed upon with our immortal bodies. Immortality with identity gone would have little meaning.

The earth, though swept by the flames in such a manner as to destroy its present fashion, nevertheless reappears again the identical earth now known to us, but changed and transfigured. One of the changes especially noted is the absence of the sea. The judgment that overwhelmed the preadamite rebellion against God was followed by nothing but sea. "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). The ruin was well nigh absolute. All forms of life were gone, and nothing remained but a shoreless sea, over whose restless and barren waters the darkness lay. Even the restoration of this ruin for the abode of man was only partial, for still the waters cover seven-eighths of his earth.

In the final restoration of the earth the *sea* disappears forever. The literal fact must not be ignored, however fruitful in spiritual suggestions it may be. The *new earth,* with no reminder of previous judgments, shall abide for ever, "that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his

grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (EPH. 2:7).

The earth is not to be burned into a cinder and cast away as useless into some slag heap. It is to be transformed, and perpetually irradiated with the glory of God. This wonderful truth is next brought to our attention. "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." This is not the restored Jerusalem, the capital city of the Millennial kingdom, but a new Jerusalem altogether—"a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (HEB. 11: 8-10).

Shall Abraham, and these others of like faith, fail to find the city they looked for? No, they shall not fail. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (HEB. 11:13-16). Again, at the close of this remarkable chapter, it says: "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (HEB. 11:39-40). Without *us* they cannot be made perfect.

The new Jerusalem, though built by God and descending from heaven, is in manifest connection with the earth, and therefore also in connection with Israel, whose blessing is dependent upon and identical with that of the earth. Israel's inheritance, as we have seen, extends beyond the Millennium, and, though distinct from it, is coextensive in duration with that of the heavenly saints. Even as "one star differeth from another star in glory," so shall Israel and the Church, in different spheres, shine through the ages of eternity. Here, as elsewhere in Scripture, Israel, the Church, and the nations are viewed separately. These distinctions are not obliterated by eternity, and the three are seen here in different but definite relation to the city of God. The Church's relation is obvious enough.

Jesus says: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you" (John 14:2). The Father's house, with its many mansions, is the bridal city of the King. Beautiful, perfected, and lighted with the glory of God, it descends from Him, and unites forever a redeemed earth with an imperishable heaven. The Church dwells in the bridal city. Israel and the nations are still upon the earth to which the city descends. The Church must be located somewhere in eternity, and if God has decreed to make the scene of her conflict the place of her eternal glory, who shall make His purpose void? Such a concrete conception as that of the Church being eternally connected with a literal city descending from heaven may be stigmatized as materialistic and sensuous, but it is better than the vague and misty fog that constitutes the idea of eternity entertained by so many. This city cannot be heaven, for it is said to descend from it. Heaven loses nothing by the loss of the city, nor does the Church lose her heavenly inheritance in her association with Him who has now come to fill the earth with His glory. The city is a literal one,—as literal as any city man has ever built,—and the Builder and Maker of it is God. It is therefore the *holy* city, and its bridal attire speaks of the marriage morning when

God will rest in His love, and joy over the redeemed with singing. (ZEPH. 3:17).

"The holy city." With no other features given save this one, there would be enough to exhaust the imagination in the attempt to get a clear conception of what is involved.

In Jerusalem, the royal metropolis of the earthly kingdom, all is *holy*. As to this, prophecy is definite: "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLY UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD'S house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts" (ZECH. 14:20-21. R. V.). This, though glorious, is but the type of what comes before us in Revelation. The holy city referred to by Zechariah is the old Jerusalem, redeemed and made holy by the restraint of all evil. On the other hand, the holy city of Revelation is a New Jerusalem and is essentially "holy." It is the "holiness" of the city that occasions the difficulty in thought about it. With the conception of a city we are familiar enough, but this is a long remove from any associated idea of holiness. The first murderer went out from the presence of the Lord, "and builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch" (GEN. 4:17). Ever since that day, the continuous drift has been toward the city, and man, estranged from God, has been building it after the manner of Cain. "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honor abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly: *yet their posterity approve their sayings*" (PS. 49:11-13).

In like manner one city has displaced another upon the face of the earth, and, as a rule, each one has developed into a reeking hotbed of corruption. In each city municipal reform has

been attempted, but the result has always been almost hopeless failure. From Babel to Babylon in its final form of iniquity, the city has been the center of Satan's activity, and has been the illustration, as well, of man's effort to live in independence of God. The natural tendency of men to a city is not of itself evil. In the city is demonstrated the value of coöperation and association. More and more the city's attraction for the natural heart has made a constant drain upon the rural regions. In the steady growth of cities there has been found also the fullest development of evil and opposition to God. The city, instead of becoming increasingly holy, becomes worse and worse, until Babylon illustrates the final condition in becoming "the dwelling place of demons and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird."

In contrast with such a city, developing more and more into evil, there has been ever in progress the constitution of another city whose builder and maker is God, and which at last appears from heaven, and is characterized as "the holy city." If the thought of a literal city seem gross and materialistic, it is nevertheless what the terms of Holy Scripture imply, and these terms, such as "jasper walls," "gates of pearl," and "streets of gold," are what the Spirit has assuredly used to represent eternal realities. In lieu of something more satisfactory, we may be pardoned for the disposition to hold as nearly as possible to the literal description.

When the holy city appears, a great voice from the throne is heard saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God." The Millennial name of Christ is to be "Immanuel,"—"God with us." The significance of that name shall shine forth, when "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them." The tabernacle in the wilderness was the prototype of the glorious reality. To Moses Jehovah said: "And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount" (Ex. 26:30). This taber-

nacle was the dwelling place of Jehovah, and He alone could furnish the design of it, and prescribe the manner of its furnishing. Christ, as John assures us, was the antitypical tabernacle. "The Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of an Only-begotten with the Father, full of grace and truth" (JOHN 1:14 Gr.). The first tabernacle was characteristic of God's dwelling place among the people while they were under law; and their inability to draw nigh to Him was proclaimed by the unrent veil before the most holy place. The apostle says: "The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing" (HEB. 9:8). "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (HEB. 9:11-12). This shows how Christ was the substance of which "the first tabernacle" was the shadow. Christ once tabernacled among men, but they cast Him out; and not till He returns shall "the tabernacle of God" be among men. The coming of Christ can alone answer to the vision of the holy city coming down out of heaven from God. The holiness, so strenuously insisted upon in these last days by ethical teachers that see no necessity for the personal return to the world of the Lord Jesus, is here shown to be impossible of realization apart from Him. To these teachers and their followers the word of Christ is, "Without me ye can do nothing." By these words, Rabinowitz, standing on the Mount of Olives and viewing the desolations of Jerusalem, was converted, and he returned to his people an apostle of the only gospel that has any vital power in it.

When shall we give up the hopeless effort of doing anything without Jesus? The holy city testifies to the suppression of all evil, and it opens the way by which God in holiness can associate Himself with men.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:9-10). This revealing them unto us by His Spirit is surely in no wise in disregard of the written Word. What shall it be when there is no longer a veil to hide God from our eyes: when He shall be with us, and we shall be with Him; and when we shall be His people, and He shall be our God? The result of such a communion is immediately given: "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." This does not mean that there shall be no tears in heaven. Tears are not necessarily the witness of pain. The memories of earth, if borne with us, would be enough to start the tears in heaven; but these God shall wipe away from our eyes. Then follows the abolition of all things that, with their deep furrows of mystery, have marked and marred the earth. "And there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." The removal of these former things is nothing short of the full repeal of the curse.

"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true." These last words are for confirmation. The true conception of a life delivered from pain and sorrow, and forever free from the shadow of death, cannot be framed by the human mind; and even the understanding of it that we have is limited by our inability to interpret fully the inspired terms of its description. These terms have been given us by the Spirit of God and He alone can enlarge our understanding to take in the full measure of the meaning of them. God is to make *all* things new. Not a vestige of the old is to remain. Do we desire all things to become new? Would we have every relationship transfigured and glorified? Are we eager to escape from the limitation of thought and time: from the bondage and sorrow and pain that are incident to things here?

Can our stammering tongues tell what this shall be? No, except they tell it in the words of the Spirit—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 JOHN 3:2). Like *Him!* Redeemed, transfigured, crowned. No death, no sorrow, no crying, no pain; "for the former things are passed away."

"These words are faithful and true," and in confirmation thereof, "He said unto me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." He has indeed made good the title claimed by himself in the eighth verse of the first chapter. There at the beginning, as here at the ending, He is still the Alpha and Omega, the ever faithful, covenant-keeping God.

In connection with this same blessed title, He proclaims the grace of His gospel. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Though this gift of living water be of pure and sovereign grace, as it was of old at Jacob's well, nevertheless it is the *overcomer* that gets it. "He that overcometh shall inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Though there be conflict, there is also the assurance of triumph. Divine grace sends the soldier of Christ into the battlefield, but at the same time holds over him the crown of certain victory.

In contrast with the bliss of the redeemed, we have the doom of the lost—"But for the cowardly, and faithless, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Strangely enough, it has been argued that the dissolution of the heavens and the earth involves also the passing away of the lake of fire. This argument is found only in the writings of the objectors to everlasting punishment, who surely overlook this passage in Revelation or deliberately pervert it. The announcement of doom is subsequent to the passing away of

the present fashion of the world, for it follows the descent of the holy city, which unquestionably comes after the dissolution of all things.

The locality of the lake of fire is not revealed. This lake is not hades; it is not the abyss, nor in any way necessarily connected with it; it is hell, and hell may be as far removed from the earth as it is from heaven. At any rate, hell is in no wise affected by the passing away of the heaven and the earth. It is still in existence when the new earth appears, and to it the wicked are consigned.

The moral nature of those to be cast into hell is clearly set forth. "The cowardly" are such as have not the courage of their convictions, and that shrink from sharing the reproach of Christ. It requires courage to maintain without faltering the whole truth of God's Word. "The cowardly," through fear of man, pervert the truth, and adapt it to the desire of the natural heart. The human heart, with its natural sympathies, is not to be the standard to which the Word of God must conform. That Word must be taken in its full and naked simplicity. However much the heart may argue against the possibility of a lake of fire reserved for the wicked, and burning unto the ages of ages, such nevertheless is what the Word of God plainly declares, and what must be courageously maintained against all gainsayers.

If there be no place of punishment for impenitent sinners, what is to become of them? On the one hand it is argued that the wicked shall be annihilated; on the other hand that they, through some purgatorial process, shall reach a final restoration. The advocates of both hypotheses, in their labored attempt to reconcile their vagaries with the Word of the living God, have only exhausted their own wisdom, and our patience. The interests of Satan could not be better served than by creating the impression that the Scriptural statement of everlasting punishment is nothing more than mere poetic exaggeration, which is all hell means—if it mean anything—in the minds of those who so incessantly toil to explain it away. In

answer to them it is in vain for us to make appeal to such a plain statement of Scripture as the one before us. If, in support of the orthodox opinion, we present argument from the Book of Revelation, we are said by them, "to be hard driven"; and to belong to a class of advocates that "are glad to take their stand among the hieroglyphs that attract us to the isle of Patmos." With such veiled contempt, it may seem a comparatively easy thing to dispose of argument, but the branding with a stigma does not obliterate the Word of God. Even though Holy Scripture be written in "hieroglyphics," these have attached to them specific meaning which it is our business as biblical students to translate. At any rate, however the hieroglyphs may abound elsewhere in Revelation, there are none in the passages that reveal the fact of everlasting punishment. "The lake of fire" is, no doubt, a symbolic expression. But of what is it the symbol? We need not think of a literal fire, tormenting unto the ages of ages those cast into it; and yet, "fire" is the very word that is written, and if it does not mean literal fire, What then does it mean? Is it something less? or something more? Who shall decide it? To what court of appeal shall we take this question? Where, outside of Scripture, shall we find an answer to it? If God has chosen to describe the doom of the wicked in such appalling terms, then that doom, if not literally what the language implies, must at least be commensurate with it—aye, and if the figure be fearful, what must be the fact? The only alternative to the full acceptance of this is the discrediting of Scripture altogether. Jehoiakim's method of disposing of God's Word is becoming increasingly popular. It may be "cut with the penknife and cast into the fire that is on the hearth:" but, living and indestructible, it shall rise again from the ashes, and it shall be "easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail" (LUKE 16:17). Destructive criticism may extinguish the fear of everlasting punishment, but it cannot destroy the truth in the words "Outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (MATT. 25:30). Hell

cannot be annihilated by the counter assumption that the passing away of the heavens and the earth involves the passing away of the lake of fire. The solemn and reiterated warnings of Scripture should be sufficient to impel the wicked to flee such an everlasting doom, and these warnings would be sufficient if it were not for the fact that among so-called Christian commentators Satan has found ready instruments to explain away the Scriptures, or to strip them of everything distasteful to the natural heart of man. "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14). Let others, whose eyes have been opened to read the plain statements of Scripture, lift up their voices in solemn warning. The declarations of the Bible about hell are positive, and plain, and cannot be made void by the vain reasonings of men. Though Sodom be doomed, there shall be no destruction of the righteous with the wicked, and, as of old, faith's challenge rings out: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). Sodom shall burn when the last righteous man is delivered from it, and then: "The cowardly, and faithless, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

The announcement of this awful fate of the lost is preceded by the blessed invitation of God's grace in the gospel. Can God justly be charged with obduracy, if, after His long-suffering patience with sinful men, He punishes those that have renounced all allegiance and subjection to His righteous government and that have despised every overture of His mercy? "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned" (Heb. 6:7-8).

God is good, and the doom that awaits the impenitent sinner cannot for a moment change His goodness, nor make that

goodness less than it is. It is not for man to tell us who God is and what God should do. "Canst thou find out the deep things of God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than Sheol; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. If he pass through, and shut up, and call unto judgment, then who can hinder him? For he knoweth vain men: he seeth iniquity also, and him that considereth not" (JOB 11:7-11. R. V. Marg.).

The Great White Throne, standing grand and immovable at the end of the ages, shall vindicate the justice of the JUDGE who fills it, and from the face of that JUDGE the earth and the heaven shall flee.

XXXV

THE BRIDAL CITY

And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in [the] Spirit to a mountain, great and high, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brightness was like that of a most precious stone, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal. It had a wall great and high, having twelve gates, and at the gates, twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are those of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. On the east three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and upon them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that spake with me had a golden measuring reed, that he might measure the city, and its gates, and its wall. And the city lieth foursquare, and its length is as much as the breadth. And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall of it, a hundred and forty-four cubits, the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation, jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprasus; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: each one of the gates was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty is the temple of it, and the Lamb. And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon that they should shine for it; for the glory of God lightened it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. And the nations shall walk by the light of it; and the kings of the earth bring their glory unto it. And its gates shall not be shut by day, for night there shall be none there. And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations unto it. And there shall enter into it nothing that

is common, nor he that doeth abomination and falsehood: none but those written in the Lamb's book of life. And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it and of the river, on this side and on that side, the tree of life bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be upon their foreheads. And there shall be no more night, and they have no need of the light of lamp, nor light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign to the ages of ages.—(Chapters 21:9; 22:5.)

THIS expanded vision of the new Jerusalem does not, for its interpretation, demand a return in thought to the conditions existing during the Millennium. The Millennium is the theme, indeed, of the prophecies in the Old Testament, and beyond the Millennium these prophecies rarely go. There are only two passages—and both of them in Isaiah—that give but a brief glance at what lies beyond the Millennial reign of Christ. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Is. 65:17). Following this, the prophet at once returns to the conditions existing during the Millennium. In another place he says: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain" (Is. 66:22). Again, with this brief announcement of Israel's inheritance in the new earth, the prophet comes back to these same Millennial conditions. This is the general character of Old Testament prophecy, which does not contemplate anything beyond the earthly reign of the Messiah. Such a limitation, however, is found nowhere in the New Testament, and a return to the Millennial earth in this vision of John would be incongruous and perplexing. There may be difficulties in the way of harmonizing what is implied in the terms of this vision with our own thoughts of eternity, but

this should not discourage us, for eternal conditions may be altogether at variance with our ideas of them. The all-important question is, What does the Word of God say? We must again insist upon the fact that the new Jerusalem that descends from God is a literal city, built by Him, and is to be forever the link between the new heaven and the new earth. Surely every detail in reference to that city, its building and its inhabitants, cannot but be of the deepest significance. Scripture may be reticent, but all the more attention should be given to the little that it does say. The human soul longs to know what lies beyond the borderline of time, but unfortunately for its satisfaction, the vast amount of what has been said in the way of interpretation is mystical in the extreme, and it has served rather to explain away than to define what nevertheless is given in language easily understood.

One of the seven angels offers to show the seer the bride, the Lamb's wife, and for the purpose carries him away to a mountain, great and high, and shows him the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.

What follows is an expanding of the vision given in the last chapter. There the city and its inhabitants were regarded as identical. Here the description is of the city proper, as distinct from its inhabitants or others that may enter into it. This distinction is evident from the passage in Hebrews already considered. (HEB. 12:22-24).

The "bride of the Lamb" is not the same as "the bride" of Jehovah, spoken of in the Old Testament in reference to Israel, and in connection with the earth. The word "Lamb," so significant elsewhere, retains that significance here, and speaks of sacrifice through death by violence,—"a Lamb as it had been *slain.*" The Lamb's bride is constituted by a company gathered together during the time of His rejection; and is the Church.

She, in her eternal and unchangeable relation to Christ, is here seen in the inhabitants of the city. She has suffered with

Christ, and now she shall reign with Him, and be also glorified with Him. (2 TIM. 2:12; ROM. 8:17). "This is," as the apostle Paul says, "a great mystery" (EPH. 5:32). However great the mystery, the blessed fact remains that the redeemed in Christ, who have shared in His present rejection, constitute the inhabitants of that glorious city, whose builder and maker is God.

The characteristics of the city, apart from its inhabitants, are now to be brought before us. Its surpassing glory is first mentioned. "Her brightness was like that of a most precious stone, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Here, as before, the jasper stone is the diamond, and the dazzling light of this precious gem flashes from the descending city.

Like the Millennial Jerusalem, the city is walled. Like that typical city also, it has twelve gates; but transcending the glory of the other. At the gates are stationed twelve guardian angels, and on the gates are written the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. This plainly testifies to the fact that entrance to the city is in some way connected with these twelve tribes.

The Old Testament, with its various types and shadows, points onward to the New, and thus it is that Israel's history leads up to the gates of the city. The national rejection of Christ could by no possibility defeat divine purposes of grace. Israel's temporary loss was the enrichment of the world in the universal proclamation of grace. Israel may indeed lead us to the gates of the city, but there Israel must abide until other purposes of God are fulfilled. The city also has twelve foundations, and on these are written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Here we have the New Testament in contrast with the Old. The Old Testament brings us to the gates of the city, while in the New we find the foundations on which the city is built. The glories of the two covenants, old and new, are alike disclosed in the holy city that descends from heaven.

The measurement of the city is given next—"and its gates, and its wall." Are we to regard these measurements as literal?

Why not? A literal city must have dimensions, and the terms used in regard to this literal city, if they do not define the exact area, they nevertheless express solid dimensions. The city is revealed as being a *cube.* "He measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal."

The city being foursquare, either this measurement was of one side, or it entirely encompassed the city. The length and breadth and height being equal, the city, therefore, was a cube—of three thousand furlongs, if only one side of the city were measured; or of twelve thousand furlongs, if the measurement encompassed the city.

"And he measured the wall of it, a hundred and forty-four cubits." If the cubit here mentioned be the usual one, the city proper would tower high above the walls, but we are expressly told that this cubit was *not* the ordinary one. The words are: "A hundred and forty-four cubits, the measure of a man, that is, of the angel." Lange says: "The additional clause: *which is that of an angel,* occasions difficulty." But, wherein lies the difficulty? There would indeed be difficulty, were the additional clause not there. Had the ordinary cubit been the measure, then the wall would have been altogether out of proportion to the height of the city: but the measure is one that surpasses the human cubit, for it is not only "the measure of a man," but it is that "of the angel." This "additional clause," instead of occasioning difficulty, serves to make plain what might be otherwise obscure, namely, that the height of the wall is not out of proportion to the height of the city. Expositors call our attention here to the exceptional cubit used for the measurement of the restored temple in the vision of Ezekiel; and Grant finds in this exceptional cubit of Ezekiel an explanation of the exceptional cubit in Revelation: "The one who measures is, in Ezekiel, spoken of all through as a 'man'; but the measure shows a difference from mere human measurement, which is noted for us. It is human measure, for the cubit is used, which is such, but the cubit

is more than the human one. Each cubit in it is 'a cubit and an handbreadth,' not the ordinary one. This has perplexed the commentators, who explain it in various and contradictory ways. The rationalistic one is that Ezekiel simply adopted the cubit of the country in which his people were now captives,—it is a Babylonian cubit, therefore, that we find here. Think of God taking this as a measure of His own things! but what does this 'cubit and an handbreadth' mean? Meaning there is and must be everywhere, so that we are surely right in inquiring as to it. Such a detail is not given us without there being in it something that is to be carefully observed. The cubit, then, was the common, human measure. The handbreadth added made it more than the human. That is surely plain, and it seems to refer us at once to what we have in Revelation, where the measure is stated to be 'the measure of a man,' but not an ordinary man—in fact, 'the measure of an angel.' Let us look at these measures further. What is a cubit? It is simply the human fore-arm, the measure taken from the elbow-tip to the end of the little finger. The cubit is in Hebrew *ammah*, which in its application to it evidently means 'support.' The fore-arm is that upon which one supports oneself in various positions. Now, if this be the simple, human measure, there may yet be a divine meaning in it, for God works through everything, and nothing is left without the touch of His hand. Now the measure in human hands, and as used here, is, as we may say, the measure of accomplishment. A man lays down by measurement the house that he is projecting for himself. But while it is thus significant of what is to be humanly accomplished, the weakness of man comes out in his very measure. He needs in every undertaking, in everything that he accomplishes, the support of Another. He does what he is permitted and enabled to do—no more. The cubit by itself is, then, strictly human. But now, if we add the handbreadth to it, this gives us plainly, according to what we have seen, what is beyond man; and if we look at the only occurrences of it

elsewhere, we shall find it in the border which is made to the table of shewbread, a 'border of a handbreadth round about.' If the table speaks, then, of communion with God, which is the fundamental thought, the handbreadth round about it is at once the divine guard and the divine support. The full breadth of the divine hand it is that is round about here. Now let us apply this to the cubit in Ezekiel. If the cubit show in itself human weakness, that will not do for what is before us in the vision of the prophet. The divine hand must come manifestly in. Man may be permitted his part in the structure which the prophet sees in vision, but it must be man enabled and guarded by the divine hand which is upon him. Ezekiel in his own person shows us this hand of the Lord in its effect upon himself (Chapter 40:1). Thus the human element testifies to gracious communion on man's part, which God permits and enables for. It testifies of how near to man God is coming, and of his desire for that wonderful intimacy which, as the Lord taught His disciples, when enjoyed upon earth, was the pledge and foreshadow of that that was to be eternal (JOHN 14:2). In Revelation, therefore, the interpreting angel is still the 'man'; and the measurement, as we have seen, adapts itself to this. With Christ before us, we know well *that the human measure now for God must be, nevertheless, beyond what is merely human.*"

In Ezekiel's vision, (EZEK. 40), we have the Millennial temple; but in the vision of Revelation we have the holy city which is *all* temple; the "spiritual house," of which Peter speaks, (1 PET. 2:5), "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (EPH. 2:20-22). The redeemed are called the "temple" because they are the glorified inhabitants of the city. The city itself is constituted of "foundations" and "walls," and "gates" and "streets," and the "many man-

sions" of the "Father's house" in which the redeemed dwell. This heavenly city, therefore, is measurable, and if these dimensions be not exact, then they must be relative, without difference in proportion of parts.

After the city has been measured, there is brought to our attention its building materials. "And the building of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: each one of the gates was of one pearl." Are these literal too? Yes, if the words mean what they say. If these are symbols, then we must insist that what they symbolize be not less glorious than they. The words imply something more than mere form and measurement, otherwise the best commentator would be simply he who could most accurately apply a foot-rule. In this glorious city of His own building, however, God makes no use of man's cubit, but measures it with His own majestic standard.

"Every line and curve in His works that surround us," as another says, "every rose-petal, every heath-bell, every palm-branch, and every thyme flower,—all measured for use, and for beauty, and for harmony in endless variety, by an inflexible law that makes all provision for every form of exquisite loveliness, and for all glorious movements of sun and stars. The telescope and the microscope tell of His perfect measuring. That which is immeasurable is His power, His wisdom, and His love."

In addition to the measurement of the city there are given to us both form and color. Of these not much is made in the usual dry and barren interpretations of the glowing apocalyptic visions,—as if form and color were not to make any appeal to us in eternity. If, indeed, they will not, then shall we in eternity be strangely different beings from what we are here.

Man is now constituted by body and soul and spirit. The spirit was designed to control man, but it has become, because of sin, subject to limitations, so that the soul has taken posses-

sion of him and governs him by the senses and instincts. In eternity these limitations shall be removed from the redeemed, and the spirit shall be enthroned over them in the place of original intention, and they shall no more be governed by the instincts and senses that so largely dominate them now. We are not now what we shall be in eternity. The resurrection body of man redeemed will not be spiritual in its material, but will be a body subjected to the spirit, as the present body is subjected to the soul. This does not involve the annihilation of the sense of the beautiful in form and color, but is rather the full development of its power of perception—its knowledge absolute instead of relative. Therefore both in form and color the city of God is set before us. What eye hath not seen nor ear heard, God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit; and in such terms as are here given to us. As we look at the city so revealed, the effect produced upon us is according to the measure of our ability and capacity to take in spiritual things, and the effect may be as various as that produced by a sunrise in the Alps upon the various beholders of it. God has taken man's precious things in order that through them He may set before us the building materials of the new Jerusalem. If a city so constructed does not appeal to us, and these materials be asserted to be but symbols, then let their interpretation be not less glorious than the symbols themselves. This city of gold, with walls of jasper and gates of pearl, rising resplendent on its jeweled foundations, is surely replete with spiritual suggestions.

In the arrangement of the precious stones of the foundations, Lange points out, that in "respect of color, we distinguish *blue* stones: Sapphire, chalcedony, amethyst; *Green:* Emerald, beryl, and, more or less, chrysoprasus; *Golden* or *yellow:* Chrysoprasus, chrysolite, topaz; *Red:* Hyacinth, sardonyx, sardius. The jasper is, most probably, as a diamond, of the pure hue of light; as an ordinary jasper, it would be non-translucent and of various colors. It is evident from chaps. 4:3, 21:12, as well as from the fact that in accordance with

New Testament order it stands at the beginning, and in accordance with Old Testament order at the close, that it is to be regarded as the chief or most precious stone."

In these jewels there are mingled the hues of violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red, and a glance at them at once suggests the effect produced by the rainbow. "God is light."

The glory of the light is seen in the bow. The bow also is the sign of God's covenant with the earth. These lights that blaze from the foundations of the eternal city proclaim God's glory and His faithfulness. They speak of His various attributes which sustain the wall by which the redeemed are eternally safeguarded.

Are the gates of pearl also significant? Yes, of a sinner saved by grace. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (MATT. 13:45-46). The "merchant man" is Christ, and the "pearl of great price" a sinner redeemed by His precious blood. No other jewel could so definitely and beautifully symbolize the saved sinner. The pearl is found in certain shell fish and, in the beautiful words of the Scottish preacher, William Arnot, it "probably owes its origin to the presence of some minute, foreign substance within the shell which is distasteful to its occupant." "Not being able to cast out the intruder," he says, "the feeble but diligent inhabitant covers it with a sort of saliva, which hardens over it into a substance, similar in consistency and sheen to the interior of its own shell. When the material, distilled in imperceptibly minute portions from the living mollusc, has chemically agglomerated round the original kernel the pearl is made. Thus unconsciously it manufactures those indestructible and much coveted jewels for the sake of which its own life is sought and taken by man."

After the manner of the pearl the redeemed are formed. Sin is the hateful and foreign intruder which has fastened itself to man made originally in the image of God. True,

God might have expelled and annihilated the guilty sinner, but with the unwelcome evil He has another way of dealing. Hear the song of exultation sung by one of the redeemed in the ages past: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Is. 61:10).

It is because sinners are "clothed with the garments of salvation," and "covered with the robe of righteousness," that they appear at last as "a bride adorned for her husband." So are formed the precious pearls that had as their purchase price Christ's own blood. Of one pearl was each one of the twelve gates of the city. Does the number twelve in any way limit our conception? It rather more fully defines it. Three is the number of divine manifestation; four is the number invariably used in reference to the world; these, connected by a cross, are thus, $3 \times 4 = 12$. This connection is not a mere fancy, but it is a fact of the most precious significance. God has connected and united to Himself by the cross of Christ this lost world, and this connecting cross is the place where the vile sinner is transformed into the pearl of Christ's purchase. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (MAL. 3:17).

Let these gates, then, speak to us of the sovereign grace of God. There was a time when there was no gate; when the way to heaven was as effectually barred as the gates of paradise were against the first guilty pair. Then came the Saviour, proclaiming Himself the door, the way, the truth, the life, and no other way of access to the Father has been opened but by Him. By His cross of shame heaven and earth are linked together, and the redeemed of His grace are the precious pearls of testimony to it, and, in proclaiming that grace, they become themselves the gates to others. They testify to the glory of

Him who alone made access possible. Therefore it is said, "Blessed are they who wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city."

The number twelve is that of divine government, and this, together with the word "gate," speaks of the administration of justice. When Christ shall reign, the saints also shall reign with Him. The four corners of the world are each faced by three gates, "and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

"And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass." Gold is the symbol of divine holiness. The ark was overlaid with pure gold, and this typically proclaimed the deity of Christ Jesus. The streets of God's city are all of gold, all holy. The street, as the meeting-place of earth, is the scene of traffic and turmoil and greed. In the new Jerusalem all is holy, and they who walk the golden street are themselves become the partakers of the divine nature. "No temple therein," did John see, but he accounts for its absence when he says: "For the Lord God Almighty is the temple of it, and the Lamb." The word "temple" here used is the one used to define "The holy of holies." There God was hidden behind the veil, but the veil was rent on calvary, and in the heavenly city is gone from His face.

"And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon that they should shine for it; for the glory of God lightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." Nothing is here said of the destruction of the sun or moon, but as light-givers they are no longer needed to lighten the city of God. Sun, moon and stars, in their appointed sphere, may shine on forever. Their light shall not be needed in the new Jerusalem, for the glory of God shall lighten it and "the Lamb is the lamp thereof." A lamp is not the light, but a medium for its display. "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light"

(LUKE 8:16). Through Christ alone the glory of God shall be revealed, and we shall know the meaning of the words, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (JOHN 14:9). "And the nations shall walk by the light of it; and the kings of the earth bring their glory unto it. And its gates shall not be shut by day, for night there shall be none there. And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations unto it. And there shall enter into it nothing that is common, nor he that doeth abomination and falsehood: none but those written in the Lamb's book of life."

Again, to interpret this, there is no necessity of returning to Millennial conditions. At the close of the Millennium, as during it, there shall be nations. In this conception there is no difficulty, nor is there any in the fact of their having access to the holy city, unto which they shall bring their glory and honor.

Dean Alford says: "Among the mysteries of this new heaven and new earth this is set forth to us: that, besides the glorified church, there shall still be dwelling on the renewed earth nations, organized under kings, and saved by means of the influences of the heavenly city."

Again he says: "If the kings of the earth, and the nations bring their glory and their treasures into her, and if none shall ever enter into her that is not written in the book of life, it follows, that these kings, and these nations, are written in the book of life. And so perhaps some light may be thrown on one of the darkest mysteries of redemption. There may be, —I say it with all diffidence,—those who have been saved by Christ without ever forming a part of His visible organized Church."

It is an incontestable fact that many Israelites are saved without ever forming a part of the visible, organized Church; and it is quite as easy for us to believe in the salvation of other people without their having any part whatever in the Church of Christ, visible or invisible, organized or unorganized. At any rate this vision is *post-millennial.* Here is

the new earth to which the holy city has descended, and in their different relations to it the Church and Israel and the nations are seen. There is no difficulty here except such as is created by preconceived opinion. According to the terms of Matt. 19:28, the Church reigns with Christ during the Millennium, and Israel becomes the channel of blessing to all the nations of the earth. In testimony of this all the prophecies unite. With Christ enthroned, the Messianic kingdom is established; Israel becomes the center of blessing to the surrounding nations; and these participate in the terrestrial glory.

The revolt of Gog and Magog at the end of the Millennium does not necessarily imply a general rebellion of the nations. In fact, the passage now under consideration distinctly implies the contrary. The rebellion of Gog and Magog is only of the nations to which these terms apply. The other nations neither unite in that rebellion, nor do they share in the judgment that overwhelms it.

Although the earth be dissolved by fire, Israel does not cease to be the object of God's love, but as a nation survives this judgment. This is perfectly evident from the passage in Isaiah that goes beyond the Millennial reign, and declares the continuance of Israel in connection with the new heavens and the new earth. (Is. 66:22). That none of the other Millennial nations should in like manner survive the dissolution of the earth is almost inconceivable. We can well believe, that after Christ's reign of a thousand years many nations of the earth shall abide in the grace of God and be eternally saved. Thus they also shall have their connection with the new earth, but distinct from the Church and Israel. We are not to suppose, of course, that Jew and Gentile are to be brought upon the new earth and perpetuated there in their natural condition. The change will be as marked with them as with the rest of the redeemed, and it shall be effected on the same ground. It is only a question as to the sphere in which they shall be found.

The Church, as already noted, constitutes the inhabitants of the bridal city to which in different relations Israel and the nations are also seen. "And there shall enter into it nothing that is common, nor he that doeth abomination and falsehood: none but those written in the Lamb's book of life." In the Lamb's book of life are inscribed the names of *all* the saved. We must remember, however, that the number of names recorded in the church registers is not coextensive with those written in the Lamb's book of life. Apart from the Church there is now, and always has been, the possibility of salvation; but the *saved,* whether of the Church or not, are saved through the vicarious suffering of Christ, and their names, whether in the church registers or out of them, are written in the Lamb's book of life. Surely the saints of the Old Testament have their names written in the Lamb's book, as well indeed as the saints of other ages that belong to neither Israel nor the Church. No one, whose name is written in the book of life, shall be excluded from the city; but those that constitute the inhabitants of the city and occupy its dwelling places are not to be confused with Israel who abides in her possession of an earthly inheritance, whilst the other nations find in Israel the channel of their perpetual blessing. Thus in one great harmony all the prophecies unite.

The final words of the vision now come before us. "And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it and of the river, on this side and on that side, the tree of life bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

These words remind us of the closing vision of Ezekiel. Indeed they seem to be taken from that vision. The prophet says: "By the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters

they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine" (EZEK. 47: 12).

But the two visions are not the same. The range of Ezekiel's prophecy does not extend beyond the Millennium, whereas John's is of Eternity. Ezekiel's, nevertheless, is typical of the one in Revelation. The Millennium is measured by a thousand years, and day and night as they do now succeed each other during that period. Eternity is not measured by the flight of years, and there is no night there. Between Eternity and Time the Millennium is the connecting link. We must remember that the Millennium represents Heaven only typically, and even though their descriptive terms seem to harmonize here, we are not to confuse the two. The healing of the nations here spoken of does not necessarily involve a return to Millennial conditions. The nations that are in existence at the close of the thousand years of Christ's reign need healing for the full and final blessing which is afterwards to be ushered in. We must insist upon the fact that the terms of John's vision are descriptive, not of the Millennium, but of the Heavenly City and Eternity, and their force, under no consideration, is to be weakened in order to escape from the presumed difficulties of their precise application.

In the forty-sixth Psalm, which is nevertheless Millennial, the light of Eternity breaks through an occasional rift in the clouds. There God is seen as the refuge of the saints who have fled to Him in the time of strait, and they sing exultingly: "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Ps. 46:2). Then follows the announcement of the silently flowing river which succeeds the engulfing floods. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High" (Ps. 46:4). How like John's statement is this! "He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1).

The new Jerusalem has its river flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb; and the Holy Spirit, of Whom these waters are the type, shall be the source of blessing and refreshing to the saints in glory, who, under His gracious influence, shall inherit the multiplied blessednesses of the man that, freed from sin and with his delight in the law of the Lord, becomes like "a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Ps. 1:3). As the river, so the tree turns our thought back to Adam's paradise—a paradise lost indeed and never to be regained. Here in Revelation we have another paradise, not the lost garden of Eden brought back, but THE PARADISE OF GOD. Here is the river, and here is the tree. The river shall make glad the city of God; and the tree the heart of the Redeemer. This same tree has been mentioned already in the letter to the church at Ephesus—"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." These overcomers shall eat of the tree of life, and also partake of its nature. Rooted on the banks of the life-giving river, these trees of the Lord shall be full of sap; "the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted" (Ps. 104:16).

Beyond the dream of the prophet, God shall, in that day, give them, "Beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified" (Is. 61:3). There, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God" (Ps. 92:12-13). "The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous" (Ps. 1:4-5).

Such are the multiplied blessednesses portrayed by the river

and the tree. The literal force of the words may well be swallowed up in the depth of their spiritual significance.

As if to assure our hearts and confirm the good tidings that the clouds of Time shall never darken the skies of Eternity, the glorious affirmation is made: "There shall be no more curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be upon their foreheads. And there shall be no more night, and they have no need of the light of lamp, nor light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign to the ages of ages."

These words sound forth the full octave of a complete redemption.

Cursed,—no more. Misgoverned,—no more. Self-willed,—no more. Separated,—no more. Unowned,—no more. Wearied,—no more. Mystified,—no more. Uncrowned,—no more.

Contrast the jubilant notes here with the hoarse discord in Babylon!

In Babylon the toll of bells
A wail of anguish knells:
And all is loss.
The fleeting pleasures past,
And darkness come at last:
The swirling flood sweeps on beyond the Cross.

In Heaven the peal of bells
The song of gladness swells:
And all is gain.
The night, Star-crowned, is past,
And, glory come at last,
The Saints begin their Everlasting Reign.

In the passage in the epistle to the Hebrews, (HEB. 12:22-24), that we have already considered, the eighth note is: "The Blood." In the octave here in Revelation the eighth note is: "They shall reign to the ages of ages." Of this last anthem the fundamental tone is: "There shall be no more curse," and from this the scale ascends. The foundation of all blessing

is thus seen to be still the Cross. No more curse: for "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (GAL. 3:13).

Paul is referring to the words of Moses: "If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance" (DEUT. 21:22-23).

Death by hanging, or by crucifixion—the same word in Hebrew is used for either—was not, in the law of Moses, prescribed as a penalty. It was after death that the body was nailed to a tree, and this ignominy was put upon one who was regarded as having committed a crime worthy of the curse of God. The lifting up of the body was, as it were, to the full view of heaven, as if the victim were worthy of being accursed of God before burial. So it was that, seeking heaven's approval of that deed of theirs, they lifted up the Lord of glory on His cross of shame. "Made a curse for us," that there might be no curse in the glorious city to which He brings us. "Who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 PET. 2:24). To this tree—in contrast with the tree of life, which was, up to His atoning death, encircled with the flaming sword—our Lord was consigned. "No more curse," because Christ hath borne the penalty of sin. He has been lifted up, and He has drawn the sinner to Him.

"My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to His cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh, my soul!"

This is the first note of the glorious octave.

The second note sounds forth the absolute sovereignty of God. Rebellion against His righteous government had raised a question as to this, but the question has now been settled, and for ever. The long misrule of Satan is over.

The third note proclaims the sphere of service for the redeemed in glory. They shall serve Him. In this service the chief end of man is attained. He is self-willed no more.

The fourth note speaks of the blessedness of the "pure in heart," who now "see God." And they shall never more be separated.

The fifth note proclaims that the redeemed, having seen "him as he is," are now "like him." They are owned of Him and this amazing glory is revealed in the name written in their foreheads.

The sixth note is exceptional in its numerical significance. Six is the number of toil without rest, but in heaven rest is now gained, and when the sixth note sounds, the night ordained of God for the needed rest for man is gone.

The seventh note is that of perfection. "The Lord God giveth them light." "God is light." The redeemed are now in the light with Him. All mystery is past.

Finally the octave note rings true to its fundamental. The curse removed speaks of suffering borne; but the path of suffering leads to the throne. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 TIM. 2:12). The suffering is past, the saints are crowned in glory: "And they shall reign to the ages of ages."

Less than all this it surely could not be. Such exalted language is designed to enlarge and define our conception of the eternal state. It is given not to hide, but to reveal the surpassing glories awaiting the redeemed beyond the hills of time.

From "nebulous haze" to "formless fog" swings the pendulum of infidel wisdom, but, instead of such weird speculation, the Christian sees, over the gates of the first book of Scripture, the great statement graven by the divine hand: "IN THE BEGINNING GOD," whilst, in the last of the holy books,

at the end of time, his eyes are fixed on the grand superscription above the thrones of the redeemed: "THEY SHALL REIGN TO THE AGES OF AGES." In such contrast stand the "Oracles of Reason" with the "Oracles of God."

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 PET. 1:3-5).

XXXVI

EPILOGUE

And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true; and the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets hath sent his angel to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. And behold, I come quickly: Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book. And I, John, [am] he that heard and saw these things; and when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am fellow-servant with thyself, and with thy brethren the prophets, and those who keep the words of this book. Worship God. And he saith unto me, Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand. He that doeth unrighteously, let him do unrighteously still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to each one as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are they who wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and the morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come. He that willeth, let him take the water of life freely. I testify unto every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any one add to them, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any one will take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, the things written in this book. He that testifieth these things saith, Yea, I come quickly. Amen, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with the saints.—(Chapter *22*: 6-21.)

THE visions are at an end. The dawn of Eternity has come. To this infinitely glorious consummation the Book of Revelation has brought us. The closing words are now before us and they cannot be divested of their solemn emphasis by their being regarded as a mere afterthought and postscript.

The angel that speaks here is the same that throughout has been the accredited representative of Christ. The words of the Book are declared to be "faithful and true": and to their fidelity and truth there is affixed the divine seal. The words are the words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and, therefore, of necessity, are "faithful and true." Their utterance has been accredited by "the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets." An end, therefore, is put to all controversy by a "Thus saith the Lord." The various prophet-voices unite in one glorious harmony, because they are controlled by the Lord their God. To claim the fidelity of *thought* apart from the words is to beat a retreat. It is even more than that. It is an unconditional surrender. Words are the vehicles of thought, and if the words of Scripture be untrustworthy, so is the thought in them, and is fallible and uncertain. To assert that the Bible "contains" the Word of God is to make the mere shift of uncertainty. The trumpet gives an uncertain sound, and no one prepares himself for the battle. The apostle says: "Even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?" (1 COR. 14:7).

There is no uncertainty in the bugle note that introduces this epilogue:

"These words are faithful and true; and the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets hath sent his angel to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. And behold, I come quickly."

These words set forth two great truths; the fidelity of the Scriptures, and the coming of our Lord. These soul-inspiring watchwords have been silenced in the Church of God, and she has fled from the firing line. But God still has His picket line, and blessed is he that *keepeth* the words of the prophecy of this book.

What is meant by "keepeth"? The primary meaning of the word is "to watch," or "to keep guard." The literal translation of the passage is: "Blessed is he that keepeth

his eyes attentively fixed upon the fulfillment of this prophecy"; or, "Blessed is he that guards the integrity and force of the words of this prophecy." The word translated "keepeth" is used also in commendation of the Philadelphians: "Thou hast a little power, and hast *kept* my word, and hast not denied my name." To all such the Lord says: "Because thou hast *kept* the word of my patience, I also will *keep* thee out of the hour of temptation which is about to come upon the whole habitable world to try those that dwell upon the earth" (Chapter 3:10). What a summons this to awaken sleepers, and startle those that account prophetic study an indifferent thing! If the words of the prophecy of this book have been fulfilled in past history, there is, then, nothing left for us to *keep* after the manner implied by this word. We may be sure, however, that the seals and trumpets—much as human history may be shown to have developed in accord with them—shall speak far more definitely than they have yet done. Our place should be, where stood the prophet of old, on the watch tower, to see what He will say *in us,* and what we shall answer when *argued* with. (HAB. 2:1. Marg.). We should there find, as did he, that "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (HAB. 1:3). The meaning of this is, plainly enough, that the vision will not tarry beyond the *appointed time.* "Behold, I come quickly" are startling words to such as are being swept away by the trend of modern thought that betrays such an indifference to the glorious fact. But, "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants" (LUKE 12:37-38).

Occupation with Christ after this manner keeps the eyes free from the dust of the road; but even here warning is needed, and is given in the words "Behold, I come quickly."

When these words are spoken John falls in worship before the angel. This error of John may have been occasioned by the angel's direct discourse; but Christ is not to be lost in His representative, and the angel refuses to be worshiped. He claims to be only a fellow-servant with John and with the prophets, and those who "keep" the words of this book. Here the word "keep"—the same word as "keepeth" used above—shows that the angels also are on guard, and are intently occupied with the coming glory. Of this it is that Peter speaks, when he says, "Which things the angels desire to look into" (1 PET. 1:12).

When Christ was born, the Roman world, wrapped in darkness, was asleep: but angels were awake and all heaven was ablaze with glory.

Sleep on, imperial Cæsar, sleep!
Though in the vaulted sky
Angels proclaim, o'er Bethlehem's plain,
"Glory to God on high!"

Sleep on, imperial Cæsar, sleep!
Poor human hearts like thine
Cannot rejoice, though angel voice
Proclaim the love divine.

Sleep on, imperial Cæsar, sleep!
For o'er thy vast domain
The angels wait in royal state
On Christ come forth to reign.

While the bridegroom tarries, the world sleeps on. Even the virgins slumber, but the angels keep vigil. May we keep vigil with them, and with them *worship God!*

In direct contrast with the instruction given to Daniel (DAN. 12:4), the angel here says, "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand." In Daniel, "The words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (DAN. 12:9).

The seals are not broken until Church history is completed;

and this also marks "the time of the end." The history of the Christian Church during these past centuries justifies the interpretation given of the seven letters. The historical development and culmination into four final phases remind us of the river that, after leaving the garden of Eden, "was parted and became into four heads" (GEN. 2:10). Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea mark the diverted channel of the Life-giving River which came direct from God on the Day of Pentecost. (JOHN 7:37-39). When they have run their course, the time of the end is reached, and the seals are broken. Succeeding generations have filled up the interval between Daniel and "the time of the end," and for us there is this solemn fact, that between our time and the immediate appearing of our Lord there is not one single prophecy remaining to be fulfilled. His coming brings to an end the acceptable year of the Lord, and introduces the day of vengeance of our God. (Is. 61:2).

Solemn indeed are the words that usher in this day of reckoning: "He that doeth unrighteously, let him do unrighteously still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." By these irrevocable words the destiny of each individual is fixed for ever. It is in vain to plead for the extension of the day of grace beyond the present—a presumed "door of hope" which the words now under consideration effectually close. The coming of the Lord works no change in the moral character of man. That is fixed at the entrance into eternity and so abides for ever. Man, despite this appalling fact, rejects the grace that seeks him, and he enters upon his unalterable state at the time indicated by the words: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to each one as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." This last affirmation is made for the fourth time, and it makes good the title claimed by the Lord in connection with the declaration of Himself as the King of Israel. "Thus saith

the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Is. 44:6).

As such, He proclaims the blessedness of those who, having washed their robes, enter in by the gates into the city,—"washed their robes," for this, rather than "do his commandments," is now generally accepted as the true reading. The reference seems to be to the white-robed multitude of chapter seven, which comes out of great tribulation, having "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." This multitude enters the bridal city, not, be it noted, as inhabitants, but as those that by washing their robes have acquired the right to pass through the gates. When the Bridegroom comes, they that are ready go in with Him to the marriage, and the *door is shut.*

The Church is complete. The bride is open to no more accessions. The body of Christ is formed. Outside there are yet those who shall wash their robes, and thereby acquire title to enter the city. This speaks of a salvation outside of the Church, and of "a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and tribe and people and tongue." These enter the bridal city, but they are distinct from the company that constitutes the bride. They are the fruit of the everlasting gospel, proclaimed after the Church has been caught away to meet the Lord in the air. This occasions no confusion of mind, except among interpreters whose thought of God's salvation begins and ends with the Church. The condition of blessing is none other than that stated in Scripture throughout. The blood is fundamental. The keeping of this multitude distinct from the Church is not only required by the text, but also by the fact that the Church is to have her position of preëminence throughout eternity.

In contrast with the condition of the saved, there is stated the condition of those against whom the gates of the city are closed. "Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every

one that loveth and maketh a lie." These are outside of the city, where is also the lake of fire to which they are doomed. Though the gates of the city for ever stand open, there shall enter through them "nothing that is common, nor he that doeth abomination and falsehood." The finally impenitent, found without the wedding garment, are cast into "outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Of this revelation the source and substance are now solemnly authenticated. "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and the morning star."

Jesus claims to be not only the source of this revelation, but He declares Himself in the twofold relationship so clearly exhibited in the Book of Revelation. As "the root and offspring of David," He is the promised Messiah, the Son of God, the *King of Israel.* The title suggests to our minds the question of Jesus that put the Pharisees to silence: "If David then call him Lord, how is he his Son?" (MATT. 22:45). Their inability to answer that question, and their failure to recognize Him as David's Lord and David's Heir, resulted in the temporary suspension of their history as the covenanted people of Jehovah. Their rejection of God's grace, ignorant, if not willful, diverted its channel, and, as in the days of Elijah and Elisha, it flowed altogether in another direction. (LUKE 4:25-27). But it would be strange indeed if this should mean, that the hopes cherished by the Jewish people, and secured to them by the Word of God, were to be disappointed in the full and final displacement of Israel by the Church. This was not to be, and the temporariness of the diversion is clearly shown in the reassertion here of our Lord's title as "the root and offspring of David." Israel's prophetic history is not over, but is to be taken up once more—the broken threads gathered together, and woven by the roaring shuttle of judgment into Israel's bridal dress in the day of her espousal in Jehovah's plan and purpose. David's Lord is

David's Son and David's Heir. He is now seated at the right hand of God and He is to remain there, until His enemies be made His footstool. (Ps. 110 : 1).

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (ACTS 2 : 36).

When to this truth Israel shall have bowed, the long-diverted channel of God's grace shall be restored, and through Israel all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

As "the bright and the morning star," Jesus is the hope, and the *only* hope of the Church. From the heights whither He has gone, He sees her toiling against the contrary winds, but in some Starlit morning watch He shall come again, and she, as Peter did, shall respond to His call and go out and up to meet Him; and then she shall return with Him when the tempest is over, and Israel reaches the land. Then, as the "Sun of righteousness" He shall brighten the world with His glory.

The Church, Star-crowned, is the Harbinger of Day. Her heart awakes within her when He names Himself, "The morning star." Together with the Spirit, she speaks the one word, "Come." This "Come" is no appeal to the unsaved sinner, and its true meaning is not to be obscured by any such application. The One whom the world cast out, ay, and hung up as an object of abhorrence in the sight of God, is back from the far country to which He went to receive a kingdom. He is clothed with all authority now. His title as the Alpha and Omega, claimed at the beginning of the book, is reasserted at the end; and the intervening years of human history have but accentuated and authenticated and certified that title to the hearts of the redeemed. They wait for their Lord from heaven. When, therefore, He announces Himself as at the door in all fullness of blessing, the Spirit and the Bride unite in the word of welcome, "Come." Is there on our lips this word of welcome? Would this be the word spoken by us, if He were to come just now? Are we conscious of the fact that for us the

glory cannot come without Him, as was Asaph? Who, foreseeing this very day, said: "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and after [the] glory thou wilt receive me" (Ps. 73:24. Heb.). If so, let our witness to it be so gracious and persuasive that he that heareth shall say, Come. Meanwhile, also, let there be everywhere, while He tarries, the fullest and freest publication of divine grace. Let the weary and unsatisfied know that, until He comes, the door stands open, and that nothing but their own refusal can keep them from a share in the glory to be revealed. "He that willeth let him take of the water of life freely." Without this testimony to the boundless grace of His gospel, God will not permit this book to be closed. His grief over the denial of His love is told out in the lamentation over Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (MATT. 23:37).

Nor is there wanting the solemn warning to such as would strip the book of its force and fullness. "I testify unto every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any one add to them, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any one will take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, the things written in this book."

No trifling with this prophecy is allowed, and the very words of it are here claimed by God and guarded by Him against violation. Man may regard this book as "a patchwork of isolated, incoherent, human-made apocalypses"; he may call it, because of its literary form, "mere Hebrew rhapsody" or he may look upon it as a "prophetic poem"; he may charge it with "inexact description" or assert that it is a book of "ambiguous metaphors"; he may choose to regard its magnificent visions as nothing but "poetic imagery" or "embellishment"; he may give to it trifling or irrelevant interpreta-

tions; he may set it aside altogether as "a silent sphinx," from which no intelligible utterance is to be expected; he may ignore it, and join with them that are constructing a theology of unbelief: but Jehovah God claims *every word* of this prophecy, and upon him that would dare to add to it, or take away from it, He shall execute His solemn sentence.

In this prophecy there is given to us THE UNFOLDING OF THE AGES. The stream of time does not wander about aimlessly; but, guided by unerring wisdom, it flows in its appointed channel, and issues at last in the glory of God and the consummation of His predetermined plan and purpose. We are living in a day when all Scripture is being undermined, and undermined too by some that were placed on the walls for its defense. But, thank God, not with them lies the preservation of prophecy, but with Him who comes to fulfill it. Therefore to the warning is appended this word: "He that testifieth these things saith, Yea, I come quickly." To this final and glorious announcement the only natural response from the heart of the redeemed is: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Of our Lord's return to earth, to be glorified and enthroned in the place of His rejection, Who can estimate the meaning? At the least it means—the doom of Satan and the full repeal of the curse; it means deliverance for the whole framework of creation, now groaning and travailing in pain until He come; it means the healing of the nations, and the restoration of Israel, now scattered, and lost, and in bitter sorrow; it means, for the Church, transformation of all her membership into the image of His glory. It means, to the adoring wonder of the universe, THE BRIDAL OF THE KING; THE BIRTHDAY OF ETERNITY; THE JUBILEE OF GOD.

"EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS."

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